



January 5, 2025

“Redeemed”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Night Classes Resume. Holy Communion Meal after the Service.
Annual Church Meeting January 19, after the Service.

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Review: GALATIANS 3:6&7 ~

For both Abraham and for the Galatians... righteousness is bestowed by God on those who trust God to bestow righteousness upon them.

Biblical faith is just what we call believing in God enough to be called trust.

Faith is not the currency that buys righteousness, it is the vehicle that a person drives towards God relationally.

Verse 7 concludes that the means of gaining sonship in Abraham's family also comes as a result of believing God.

On the surface, it might seem like circumcision was a small price to pay to appease the more Jewish Christians...

Paul knew that it was a floodgate to legalism that would turn the Grace of God into a mere component of Christianity.

Christ Crucified, is relegated to the back burner.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Do you believe that you personally Crucified Jesus?

We each are fully responsible for the totality of Christ's sacrifice.

GALATIANS 3:8–14 ~

V8 the personified Word of God informed Abraham that all people groups of the world would be blessed IN him because he believed God (Genesis 12:3, Hebrews 4:12&13).

V10-12 in these verses Paul switches to providing the negative side of the argument.

Deuteronomy 27:26, but really all the way through the end of chapter 28.

Why would a good God place upon His Own beloved people a yoke that none of them could bear?

Because it was never ever about being justified by the Law.

V13 the curse language ties this verse back to verse 10. Those laboring under the Law for justification are cursed by God because they cannot fulfill all the Law, but now Christ has come.

He was the permanent solution because He was the perfect sacrifice for sin.

Redeemed is ἐξαγοράζω (ěx-ä-göř-ädz-ō). Eph 5:15&16, Col 4:5).

GALATIANS 3:15–19 ~

When we make a contract, no one can add or subtract anything after the fact.

Christ Jesus is the Seed IN Abraham and also as the Word of Almighty God.
Jesus fulfilled the covenant so that IN Him those requirements are fulfilled by us.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Galatians 3:6&7, The gist of the first 5 verses was that God provided the Galatians the Holy Spirit because they believed... Now verse 6, 6Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. 7Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Last week we examined how the opening of verse 6 functions as a hinge word (in Greek) or phrase (in English) that ties the first five verses of chapter 3 together with the rest of the chapter. Hopefully, that became obvious the way I read it.

Whether your Bible has “Just as,” “Even so,” “In the same way,” “So also,” or something similar, the point was that “Just as” the Galatians had received right-standing before Almighty God by trusting God... to make them right, so too was the case for Abraham.

Father Abraham was declared right before God, by God, because Abraham trusted God to make him right. That is precisely what the Galatians had done when they heard Paul proclaim the Gospel. In other words, for both Abraham and for the Galatians... righteousness is bestowed by God on those who trust God to bestow righteousness upon them. To believe

God is to have the faith to trust Him. It is the one and only way. Any other path to God is a false path leading to destruction.

Notice that it does not say that anyone's faith was the thing that was credited to them as righteousness. This is the point that I belabored last week, but it's important. In Romans chapter 4, Paul, in talking about this exact same thing plainly states that faith is credited as righteousness. I just said that it wasn't. It's easy to get confused.

Here's the whole thing as succinctly as I know how to put it... Biblical faith is not a thing in and of itself, rather it describes a belief in God that is real enough, strong enough, and pure enough, that it can be called trust. Faith is just what we call a belief powerful enough to be called trust.

Our trust in God, while limited and imperfect, enables our acceptance of the righteousness that He holds out to us in Christ. The most accurate way to say it is that God credits righteousness to people who believe in Him. As quoted, have no faith in your faith, instead have faith in, or believe in, or trust in, the faithfulness of a faithful God.

That's far more accurate than saying that faith is credited as righteousness by God. Once we know for sure that we are not talking about faith itself as some kind of commodity we stock on our shelves, then we can say that God credits faith as righteousness. But only when we understand what we're saying.

Remember, faith is not the currency that buys righteousness, it is the vehicle that a person drives towards God relationally. I'll prove it negatively... If there was a true atheist (there isn't, but we're imagining), that person, by definition would not believe in God at all, and consequently, they would have no relationship with Him at all.

Conversely, if a person believed in the One True Biblical God without any hint of doubt, but with complete and entire assurance, that person would literally walk with God. Enoch pleased God so much that God took Him home. The way that he pleased God was that he walked together in his life with God. The way that Enoch walked so intimately with God was by way of his faith. Enoch believed God so much that they were friends, which pleased God, and God took him home.

Verse 7 concludes from that a second, but closely related, critical point; the means of gaining sonship in Abraham's family is identical. It also comes as a result of believing God.

You see, it was possible that the Judaizers would accept that the Gentiles had been declared righteous by God solely because they believed God, but... in order for them to be fully part of God's true family, they had to be part of Abraham's family. They had to be grafted in to the True Israel as the adopted children of the Patriarch of the Jews and to do that they had to pay the price of admission.

They had to get circumcised to be initiated into the family of God and thereby ratify their status. This is no different than the thinking of legalists today who believe that a person can be Saved through faith, but then they must be Baptized in order to be fully part of God's family.

Back then circumcision was the sign of the Covenant, today, for many, it is water Baptism. For both, the act of initiation is only the first small step into a web of rules and further requirements to remain in good standing.

The Judaizers rightly understood that Jesus had inaugurated a new era with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Where they erred, was believing that the purpose of the indwelling Holy Spirit was to enable them to fulfill the Law and live as perfectly obedient Jews. For them, the purpose of becoming Christians was to finally be able to be perfect children of Abraham, whether a blood descendant or not.

Never mind that Abraham was never perfect, never mind that Abraham was declared righteous before the sign of circumcision was instituted and never mind that the Judaizers had already figured out that even with the Holy Spirit and tremendous diligence they were still unable to perfectly keep the Law.

What they did back then is precisely what such people do today. They either eliminated some of the hard-to-keep rules, as no longer being necessary, or they decided that it was okay to miss the mark, as long as you tried really hard, felt horrible about failing, and punished yourself with reproach, depression, deprivation, penance, and self-flagellation.

It never occurs to legalists that their scheme doesn't work – they just double-down. Anyway, the issue for the Judaizers back then was to get the Gentile Christians to complete the second step by becoming part of the True Israel – by becoming children of Abraham as they saw it.

Paul's point in verse 7, was that Abraham's true children are those who trust God with their Salvation, not those who try to make themselves righteous. The True Israel is Jesus and so it is all those who are in Him.

On the surface, it might seem like circumcision was a small price to pay to appease the more Jewish Christians, especially if you were a female. But Paul understood exactly what it would mean...

He knew that it was actually a floodgate that would unleash a never-ending torrent of legalistic dos and don'ts that would turn the Grace of God in Christ Jesus into a mere component of Christianity.

Haven't you seen that? Haven't you experienced a Christianity where it is all about what you must do and not do, or about the power and the Spiritual Gifts and

the destiny God has for you, or about the best way to save your marriage, find a spouse, raise your kids, and make more money, or about miraculous healing, prophecy, and special knowledge, or about patriotism, social issues, ballot initiatives, and political positions?

In such churches, Christ Crucified, is relegated to the back burner. Perhaps briefly glossed over on occasion to get to the exciting Resurrection part.

Do you know that many churches have jettisoned the Cross? Figuratively and literally. Just where does Christ belong in Christianity? Is He supposed to a given, a figure Who has served His purpose allowing us to get down to the serious business that really concerns us? Or is He supposed to be the entire focus of everything that a Christian thinks, speaks and does. Particularly in church? Well, it should be no mystery to anyone where I stand.

For the Apostle Paul, Christ Crucified was central to Christianity. There is no Christianity apart from Christ Crucified. Jesus, the Word of Almighty God made flesh and blood, never knew any sin at all and He allowed the Father to place your sin upon Him as though it were His Own sin.

The Father handed over, what was most precious to Him, into your hands. You, a vile, depraved, self-absorbed, self-abased, fearful human being opened your hands, and the Father delivered Jesus over to you.

You immediately brutalized Him beyond recognition and viciously murdered Him... with your sin.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that you personally, through your disregard of God, through your cavalier attitude about sin, through your elevation of your agenda above that of His plans for you, and through your placing your self-interest above that of others, Crucified Jesus?

We dismiss our own culpability, and so, diminish the magnitude of the Cross, and so, the sacrifice of Jesus when we minimize our own sin as not nearly as severe as that of others. We put the Crucifixion and all its attendant horrors out of our mind when we conclude that Jesus died for all of the sins, not just mine, and mine are, relative to the whole, not really even a noticeable drop in the bucket.

See how you can brush off your part in killing Jesus when you assume that your sin wouldn't even be noticeable compared to all the sin that Jesus carried.

Really, though, no matter how good you think that you are and no matter how bad you think everyone else is, the only way that God can possibly declare you righteous, is by the payment Jesus' Death on a Cross.

Even if you were the only person ever Saved, the Word of God would have to go through exactly what He went through in order to pull that off. Your sin alone is fully, entirely, completely responsible for everything that Jesus endured. You did that to Him. Your sin, and your sin alone, did all of that to the Lamb of God.

Of course, we are all in the same boat and each of us share equal responsibility, but don't ever confuse that as meaning that your share of Jesus' suffering is mitigated by everyone else's share – that's not how it works. We each are fully responsible for the totality of Christ's sacrifice.

When we lose sight of that it is easy to forget what our right relationship cost God. Remembering it now, let me ask, what would you do for Him in the New Year?

The price of admission into Abraham's family, according to verse 7, was faith alone. Well, now, Paul was going to have to prove that...

Galatians 3:8–14, 8The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." 9So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10For all who are of works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law, to do them." 11Now, that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "the righteous one will live by faith." 12However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "the person who performs them will live by them." 13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a Tree"—14in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

That's a really good argument and it's just Paul's first salvo. Verse 14 summarizes where we are at so far

concluding that first phase of the argument by proclaiming the results of it... 1) Faith leads to right standing before God. 2) Adoption into Abraham's family as his son inheriting the Blessing of God comes only by faith in God. 3) The instrumental means of righteousness is specifically faith in the completed work of Christ Jesus. 4) The confirmation of one's acceptance by God is His bestowal of His Own Spirit within them.

That's what verse 14 summarizes. You could simply trust me, and we could move on to the next set of verses, but where's the fun in that?

In verse 8 Paul quotes Genesis 12:3, but he does it in quite a profound way. He states that the Scripture foresaw what God was going to do and armed with that foresight it preached the Gospel of Salvation to Abraham. The personified Word of God informed Abraham that all people groups of the world would be blessed in him because he believed God.

According to Hebrews 4:12&13, the "Word of God" sees all, nothing and no one can escape its gaze and so, it is able to "judge your thoughts and the very intentions of your heart" and you will "answer" the Word

as everything that you are is made “open and laid bare.”

At this point, the concept of people being “Blessed in Abraham,” still means those who are part of his family and so part of him. We would think genetically, but as we now know so well, it is spiritually through believing God. This will get more interesting in verse 16, where Paul says the full meaning of in Abraham was that Christ would descend from him and become the unifying One enabling the Gentiles to be in. Essentially Christ was IN Abraham and so those IN Christ are also IN Abraham.

Verse 9 is the completely reasonable conclusion of that fact, people characterized by their faith, in other words, believing people, are the ones who are blessed in Abraham because that’s who he was and looking ahead that’s who fathered Jesus... At least in his humanity.

Now for the next 3 verses Paul switches to providing the negative side of the argument. He starts off bluntly and shockingly – what a surprise. He wrote that everyone, without exception, who labors under the Law is cursed.

To back that up he quoted Deuteronomy 27:26, “Cursed is anyone who does not fulfill the words of this Law by actually doing them.” In quoting that verse Paul no doubt had in mind the whole Passage, which ends with a summary of the blessings and curses between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. God told the Israelites that “If you are not careful to follow all the words of this Law that are written in this book,” it will be bad juju for you! Then He went on to list all kinds of horrible curses for ten more verses to close chapter 28.

Evidently, God took, the people taking Him seriously, pretty seriously and so Paul was right. For anyone trying to be justified by obedience to the Law, they are already cursed fools because no human can meet the standard, no person can live up to the requirements of the Law...

The entire point of blind justice is that it simply weighs the evidence. When it comes to God’s Law everyone is a violator and so a guilty verdict is the only verdict possible. Trying to be righteous before a perfect God by being perfect yourself is an impossible task. Anyone attempting it is already cursed and God actually designed it that way.

Why? Why would a good God place upon His Own beloved people a yoke that none of them could bear? Because it was never ever about being justified by the Law. Please see that it still isn't. Perfection is the minimum acceptable standard and we humans are completely and utterly incapable of being perfect. Only God can Save us. The foolishness of thinking that there are different methods of being justified before God under different Covenants or Dispensations at different times is astoundingly poor theology.

The entire reason that God put into place the sacrificial system was to get His people to recognize that justification came from Him granting it, not from them earning it. For them it was, follow God and honor Him by obeying Him to the best of your ability, and when you stumble, run to Him in His Holy Temple, and place your sin upon your offering, and God will accept its life as a substitute for yours. God will forgive you and you will be righteous before Him. What is the mechanism running through all of that? Faith, the righteous Jew, like Abraham before them, believed God and trusted that He would Save them.

God promised the Jews a permanent solution and Paul confirmed that God provided just that in verse 13, where he wrote, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a Tree.”

The curse language here obviously ties this verse back to verse 10. Those laboring under the Law for justification are cursed by God because they cannot fulfill all the Law, but now Christ has come and as the Word of God made flesh and so, as fully man, He was tempted just like us and was mortal just like us, but as fully God, he was able to fulfill the totality of the Law perfectly and therefore knew no sin at all.

He was the permanent solution because He was the perfect sacrifice for sin as a man who earned Heaven, He could agree to take your sin and pay your debt. If you paid your debt, because you are guilty, you would be locked in prison forever. Because Jesus paid your debt for you, you are free from your debt. He redeemed you.

The word is fascinating to me. It is ἔξαγοράζω (ěx-ä-göř-ädz-ō). It occurs five times in the entire Bible. Twice in this section of Galatians and three other times

with a very different meaning. The word is simple. The first bit is “ex” and means “out of.” The second bit is related to agora, or market, essentially, and it means “to buy.” The whole thing together means “to buy out” of something, and in this case, it is to buy out of the curse by becoming the curse.

Here's why it fascinates me... the word also functioned as a saying that meant to buy back time in the sense that you would make the most of an opportunity. The other three uses are with this sense. Ephesians 5:15&16, “So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” Similarly, Colossians 4:5, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.” The implication is that Jesus didn't redeem us without a purpose in mind.

Verse 14 confirms that implication by noting that we are IN Christ Jesus, that we have received the blessing of Abraham, and that we have received the indwelling Holy Spirit. Meaning that we're probably supposed to do something because of that.

Now we can move very quickly through the next supplemental argument...

Galatians 3:15–19, 15Brothers and sisters, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. 16Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. 17What I am saying is this: the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Paul strikes a conciliatory note here, which is important. He knows that many Galatians were genuinely Saved and filled with the Holy Spirit and although they were flirting with blasphemous theology, he knew that they were still God's children and so his own beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

One of the big problems that people have today in reading Paul's corrective Letters is that they assume

his dramatic scolding and exhorting means that Christ is in jeopardy of losing some of His Own. He's not, and part of the reason that He's not, is that He had Paul discipline them in this way and then preserved that discipline as Scripture to discipline us.

It's serious language because God cares. Do you realize that Jesus hand selected His disciples. Do you realize that He still does? That you are hand selected. That you were chosen before the foundation of the world.

Paul then gave an analogy that I have also used many times. Even though we are only self-serving mortals, when we make a covenant or contract and it is properly ratified and filed, no one can add or subtract anything after the fact. The covenant stands until all the parties renegotiate and ratify a new covenant.

The covenant that God made with Abraham was based solely on a promise made by God as Abraham believed Him. Circumcision came later as a symbol and sign of the covenant already ratified. The formal Law came in more than 400 after that.

If humans know that it is wrong to change a covenant unilaterally, how much more does God know that? How much more integrity does He have?

If God unilaterally changed the covenant, then God would be untrustworthy. This is the ole moving the goal posts injustice. People may do that – God certainly never would. He is, as a part of His character, faithful.

Christ Jesus is the Seed to Whom He Himself spoke while he was still IN Abraham. As the Seed IN Abraham and also as the Word of Almighty God, Jesus fulfilled the promise, He fulfilled the covenant, He fulfilled the Law so that IN Him those requirements are fulfilled by us as well. To be IN Jesus is to already be IN Abraham.

You might say, “I thought that God ushered in the New Covenant IN Jesus unilaterally. He didn’t consult me about changing the Old Covenant.” Correct. First, you’d have to be a Jew for that to be a concern, Second, the New Covenant is simply the Old Covenant fulfilled, and thirdly, for the New Covenant to take effect for you, you must agree to it and ratify it. He did it all, but you can either accept the fulfilled Covenant or refuse – that’s up to you.

If you accept, you are redeemed from the curse because Jesus became the curse for you... Once again, it's a new day, in a new year... what will you do for Him?