

THE LAW, A SCHOOLMASTER
BIBLE TEXT : Galatians 3:1-29.

LESSON 398 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Galatians 3:1-29

¹ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

² This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

³ Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

⁴ Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain.

⁵ He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Righteousness by Faith

"The just shall live by faith" is a law of God that has been since the beginning of time. Cain and Abel were the first people born into the world, and it was "by faith" that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). To be righteous means to be free from sin. It was Abel's faith that made him righteous, so that his gift was accepted. Cain did not have faith and was sinful, so his gift was not accepted. Good works that men do cannot change their heart and make them Christians. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

When one has been made righteous through faith, he will do good works. But God will not accept the works of people who are not righteous. Cain felt sorry for himself when his offering was rejected, but God said to him: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:7).

The Father of Faith

Abraham is known as the Father of the faithful. He was the beginning of the Jewish race, and when Jesus was on earth and the Jews did not believe His preaching, they would say, "Abraham is our father" (John 8:39). But Jesus told them that Abraham had had faith and had believed in Jesus long before Jesus was born. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham was saved by faith in Jesus and it made him happy.

Abraham lived among heathen people who worshiped idols; but he was willing to listen when God called him, and was obedient to the call. Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The good works that Abraham did during the rest of his life proved that his faith had saved him from sin.

Because Abraham believed and obeyed God, God promised him: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Jesus would be born of Abraham's descendants, and through Jesus salvation would be free to all different nations of people. The Law that was given on Mount Sinai 430 years later did not in any way affect the promise God gave to Abraham.

Glad Tidings

Gospel means "glad tidings, especially the good news concerning Christ, the Kingdom of God, and salvation" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). In our lesson today the Apostle Paul makes the statement: "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." That is proof that the people in Old Testament times were saved by faith, even as we are today. They had the Gospel preached to them through the promise that Jesus would come to bring salvation to all men. The reason the Word preached to them did not profit them was that those who heard it did not have faith (Hebrews

in them.

¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

¹⁵ Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

¹⁸ For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

²⁰ Now a mediator is not a *mediator* of one, but God is one.

²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

²² But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

4:2).

It was through the preaching of the Gospel that the Galatians had been saved. They were very happy when they felt their sins forgiven, and knew that they were Christians. But after a while they began to think about the forms and ceremonies they had observed in obeying the Law, and they felt they must still do some of them. Because of that, Paul called them "foolish Galatians."

Begun in the Spirit

Paul then asked the question: "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" In other words: Had they been saved by obeying laws or by faith in Jesus? They had been made righteous by believing in Jesus and obeying His commands. He reminded them that the just shall live by faith, and that was how they had begun their Christian walk. They had suffered much persecution for believing in Jesus. Had they suffered all that in vain? Were they now trying to please the Jews by doing the works of the Law?

When we are born again, the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). In that sense we have "begun in the Spirit." The Spirit gave the witness when we believed, not for any good works we did. From then on, we must walk by faith, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7).

Through faith we too can be the children of Abraham and inherit the blessings that God promised to Abraham. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; . . . but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Romans 2:28, 29). So if we have faith in Jesus as Abraham had, we are the children of Abraham and heirs of the promise of eternal life.

It was written in the Law: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." People who say they can be saved by keeping the Law are saying more than they can do. Without the Spirit of God in the heart it is not possible to keep even the part of the Law known as the Ten Commandments.

Reason for the Law

If it is not possible to keep all the Law without being justified by faith, and if Abraham could be justified by faith before the Law was given, why was the Law given? Paul said, "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [or Jesus] should come to whom the promise was made." God could talk to Abraham because his heart was tender; but there were few people like him. Abraham could see that Jesus was coming, but most people committed so many sins that their consciences became hard so they could not hear God talk to them. The people did not have faith, so God gave them a religion they could see, and it was meant mainly for the Jews.

The Law commanded the Israelites to bring animals to the Tabernacle to be killed as a sacrifice to God. By faith we bring our own heart and will and give them to God. The Psalmist said: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). We cannot see the "broken heart" but we certainly can feel it when one is sorry for his sins and wants the Lord to forgive him.

Many things in the Old Testament Law were pictures of New Testament truths. All the animals that were offered as sacrifices under the Law represented Jesus' coming to die for our sins, shedding His Blood on the Cross of Calvary to make atonement for the people.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

²⁶ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹ And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

A part of the Law was the Tabernacle and its form of worship. In the Holy Place was the altar of incense where the sweet smell was going up to God continually. When we are sanctified wholly, there is a praise going up to the Lord from our heart continually as was that "sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD" (Exodus 29:18). There was a golden candlestick that lighted the Tabernacle, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The table of shewbread, too, represented Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:35). Everything pointed to Jesus. He alone could save them from their sins.

The Schoolmaster

The Law was a schoolmaster teaching about Jesus. The business of a schoolmaster is to teach his students. After Jesus came to earth, there was no more need for a teacher, or "schoolmaster."

The trouble with the Jews was that instead of looking at Jesus to whom the Law pointed, they looked at the "pointer." They could not see Jesus in their sacrifices because of unbelief. All they saw was dead animals. That was why God was so much displeased with them in Isaiah's day and said: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (Isaiah 1:11, 13). These were sacrifices commanded by God in the Law, but when the people did not have enough faith to see Jesus through them, the sacrifices did not good, and they became a burden to God. He told the people He would not hear their prayers.

The Mediator

The Apostle Paul also said that the Law was "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." Moses was that mediator, or go-between. He told the people about God, and took the problems of the people to God. As the mediator, Moses was also like Christ. Moses said, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15). He was speaking of Christ who would go to Heaven to make intercession for us, as a priest. He is our Representative before God; and because He shed His Blood for us we have a right to come boldly before God, and not be afraid of His wrath. When the Blood of Jesus has washed away our sins and made us pure in heart we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

So we see that all through the Old Testament God gave illustrations of Jesus and the salvation He would bring. It would be salvation by faith, and those in the Old Testament who had faith received salvation just as we do. The just shall continue to live by faith until Jesus comes and faith is made sight.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted, but not Cain's?
2. Who was the Father of the faithful?
3. What was the promise God gave him?
4. What does the word "Gospel" mean?
5. Why did Paul call the Galatians foolish?
6. How do we know when we are saved?
7. Why was the Law given? To whom?
8. What did the animal sacrifices represent?
9. Name some ways the Tabernacle pictured Jesus.
10. How do the just live?