

Series: Legalism. License. Liberty!
Message Title: ***The Call to Live by Faith***
Date: Sunday, October 15, 2017
Scripture: Galatians 3:1-11
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

It's Sunday morning and time for confession! Last week, I suggested and encouraged you to begin reading through the book of Galatians: six chapters, one chapter a day, each day of the week for the next six weeks. While I would like to ask for a show of hands regarding your application and action, I want to ask something else (sigh of relief?).

How many of you have been mad at least one time this week? What provoked you? Were you cut off on a road or shut out on a lane? Did someone jump in front of you in line? Were your children misbehaving and challenging you—a need to discipline?

Few things prompt provocation easier than failed progress. It can be in our schedule, a project or the lives of people we love.

Failed expectations, failed responsibility,

failed self-control. For example, parents struggle when children demonstrate behavior that has been identified, corrected, and challenged, only to see it repeated again and again.

This is not just an issue for parents; it is also true of teachers. Do your students apply themselves or simply ignore both admonition and instruction? It is true of coaches and leaders. You want those around you to step up, move on, execute and advance.

It is true of pastors. It is difficult to deal with people who refuse to progress in their faith—people who have been taught, yet remain immature. They come to sit, soak and sour, but they have no intention of serving, sacrificing and advancing in their faith.

“Provocation often comes because of lack of progress.”

If you know this emotion and the urgency that it brings to you, you are now ready to read Paul’s words to the Galatians:

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched

you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Galatians 3:1 ESV).

The word, *foolish*, is the Greek word, *moros*. Sound familiar? “You morons!” Beyond admonition, it is an indictment against their chosen disrespect and disobedience to the gospel.

This word was used in the parables of Jesus when speaking of “fools”. These are people who act without reason and who can think, but simply choose not to apply moral and spiritual truth.

Having done much to define and defend the doctrine of justification through the cross, the Apostle Paul now turns to their stubborn and foolish actions and goes so far as to say, “Who bewitched you?”

Paul never saw the sitcom or the movie, *Bewitched*, but Paul knew the reality of a “spell” being cast—an unusual alteration of something that should have been natural and normal in light of the truth he had delivered to the Galatians. Paul uses language of

pagan magic to characterize what the Galatians had wandered into and how they were spellbound in their lack of progress in the knowledge and experience of God's truth.

It is as if the Galatians were frozen—prevented from moving on because they were bound up in the legalism of the Judaizers. They had lost sight of the life of faith in the full and finished work of Christ for them.

To this end, Paul moves in swift and decisive fashion to call them to something I want to call us to today—living by faith.

The faith that saves empowers us to live by the Spirit for the glory of God.

Now back to our text. With rapid succession, Paul begins to ask probing and penetrating questions—rhetorical questions—to help them see where they are and why they need to move on. Paul wanted to break in and break through their “spell bound” condition and see them advance in life through the Spirit. By the way, questions are a good

way to engage a conversation, to provoke progress!

“Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness’? (Galatians 3:2-6 ESV).

Paul is saying that in your spellbound condition, you have completely lost sight and awareness of God’s lifegiving Spirit and the power to live in a completely different realm called *faith*.

Are YOU ready for a breakthrough? You will never experience God’s power in your life until you first experience His freedom. We need forgiveness—guilt gone! This is where we begin (*justification*, right standing before God because of the work of Christ for us), but then we move forward with spiritual progress

(*sanctification*, strong living because of the Spirit of God in us). What if we believed God? What if we trusted God? What if we lived by faith? What do you think we would see God do?

This is why Paul pushed the envelope and challenged the issue of living by faith. He used the life, example and testimony of the "Father of the Jews" (Abraham) to demonstrate a faith-fueled life. Abraham's power, promise and blessing were not because of his good behavior, but because of a trust and reliance on God's goodness and grace.

Paul was asking them (and us) how they became so preoccupied with works when their earthly father, Abraham, reflected the power and the blessing of faith.

"Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with

Abraham, the man of faith. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Galatians 3:7-11 ESV).

"The righteous shall live by faith." This is the point. This is the issue. Faith, not works. Spirit-power, not human effort. God's power, not man's performance.

The faith that saves empowers us to live by the Spirit for the glory of God.

I have a question for you today. What does it mean to live by faith? Are you living by faith?



**Living by Faith is Reliance on
God's Truth, not Emotional Experience**

"The righteous shall live by faith." Faith is based on facts, not feelings.

Many people think of faith as a feeling, but

faith is not a feeling. God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part of our being! Our emotions vacillate and fluctuate.

Paul takes the Galatians back to the cross and the work of God in Christ for us.

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Galatians 3:1 ESV).

Greek, *prographo*—evidently set forth. Culturally, this referred to placards that publicly displayed official announcements for all people to see. Without newspapers, TV news, internet, etc., the marketplace became a place where public announcements and official decrees were displayed and communicated.

Here Paul is looking back to the cross—a divine action of God in which He demonstrated and declared His love for us apart from our deserving effort or disposition.

... “but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 ESV).

Paul had *prographo* this message: Christ crucified, buried, risen, seen and declared in Scriptures. How could they let their emotions run away with them when there was such evidence and effect in the work of Christ?

Fact 1: Your standing before God is based on His gracious, judicial work in Christ to save you, not your ability to keep yourself saved. You can live without guilt, shame or fear. You are justified in Jesus.

“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (Galatians 3:7-8 ESV).

sons, Scripture. You have new identity and therefore, security in Christ.

If you are in Christ, you can live with confidence. You cannot lose your salvation. You can trust God’s sustaining grace to see you through every life circumstance. His love

will never let you go!

Yet, many get into false teaching and failed living because they are dominated by their emotions rather than by faith. You are not saved because you feel saved.

Fact 2: The Spirit of God is your guarantee of salvation.

“In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV).

God’s promise never fades or fails. He loves you today, always!

Fact 3: We overcome by the power of faith.

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

(1 John 5:4-5 ESV).

Living by Faith Moves Us From the Natural Into the Spiritual Realm of Life

“Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?... Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith” (Galatians 3:2, 5 ESV).

hearing with faith. Notice *faith* is seen as having a quality that is living and being a means by which we hear.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17 ESV).

Sadly, *faith* is a word we become familiar with in our Christian vocabulary, but it is a principle we fail to understand and live by in our daily activity. We often let faith be an experience of the past (“When I trusted in Jesus”), but we fail to live in the realm of faith (“walking by faith and not by sight”).

“Living faith is not natural, it is supernatural.”

Sight-living is common and dominant in our world. Sadly, it characterizes many of us. So much of the negativity, angst and anxiety we share today come from a fizzled faith—like soda without bubbles.

But faith changes us and our responses. It is life in a different dimension.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation... And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:1-2, 6 ESV).

There are two things faith gives: assurance and conviction. Faith enables us to live a life that is dependent upon God’s goodness and grace. It allows us to live a life that is pleasing to God in and through all things.

Scripture is full of amazing examples and exhortations of faith living: David and

Goliath, Joshua and Jericho, Gideon and Midianites, Daniel and Lion's Den, etc. God enables His people to see, share and do things that get beyond sight-living and a spellbound mentality that dominates this world.

"Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith" (Galatians 3:5 ESV).

God intervenes and reveals Himself in the places that stretch, stress and shake us. Example: Abraham (75 years old).

Abraham was called by God to walk in the unknown. Nothing makes us more anxious than fearing we are lost or off track. See Genesis 12.

God speaks to Abraham about separation and direction. Abraham had to let go, release his homeland, and trust God's direction to the new place of promise. Faith is expressed in radical obedience to God.

"I'm convinced what keeps God from giving

us all He wants us to have is the fact our hand is tightly clenched around something we're not willing to let go of. In growth, the matter of letting go is always involved. The only way to grow up is by giving up. That's true, not only physically, but also spiritually. All the days of your life, you've grown by giving up certain things—you have to give up the bottle, the diapers, and the toys eventually. We call those people who are not willing to give up those things immature." —Ron Dunn

As long as we cling to natural means of security, support, identity and control, we cannot and will not know the work of God's Spirit in our lives, our church, our families and our world.

Yet, I believe that some of you came here probably not even realizing why, but you are here and ready and in need of a breakthrough. What if God wants to grant you the faith to overcome the giant in your life and experience freedom and purpose?... to be used by faith to see God breakthrough in other lives around you? The same God that created the universe, moved mountains, conquered armies, and called Abraham is the

same God living inside of you!

Living by Faith Proves the Life of God in Us and Portrays His Love Toward Others

“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Galatians 3:7-9 ESV).

Note that what God did in Abraham “by faith” was not just for Abraham. Abraham was “living by faith” and that faith-life breathed life into others.

God wanted to allow Abraham to be a source of blessing in the lives of others, in particular, the Gentiles—those furthest removed from all the ritual, forms and traditions of the Jews.

So throughout the entire chapter of Galatians 3, Paul is describing the Christian life as being Spirit-enabled and empowered. Now that

we live in the faith-realm, our lives become a means of blessing through faith.

“The blessing is nothing less than the blessing of the gospel.” —Martin Luther

Too many people cast faith in the form of personal benefit, and even prosperity. “If you believe God...” It is a faith that is focused on self-advance and acquisition. But the truth is that faith—living faith—is not about our benefits, but the benefits and blessings that come in the lives of others as we share the message of grace and faith with those around us so that they, too, may experience and know the power, grace and love of God.

It is time to stop spewing opinions all over Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Let’s just get real for a second. No one cares about your opinion. People all around us are desperate to see and experience a faith-fueled Christian!

People can be so negative, but listen. I know my future. I know my Maker. I know the same power that raised a dead man to life. Shouldn’t I be living with a different type of

attitude? An attitude of faith. An attitude of hope. An attitude of joy!

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-21 ESV).

Under the law, all are cursed and condemned. It is a diagnosis we cannot ignore, but by God’s grace, we can declare the work of Christ and the blessing of faith through His name.

God’s plan and purpose are not realized in the history of Israel, although His revelation began there. It is now being realized in a new community of Jews, Gentiles and peoples of all tongues and tribes being gathered in faith for a glory to be revealed in the last day.

Therefore, the transaction of the cross was divine and eternal. Paul insisted upon the

continuity of salvation's history—ever by grace and only through faith can we be saved, delivered and recovered from sin and its consequence. By faith, we can gain life and live a life of value, purpose and significance.

The faith that saves empowers us to live by the Spirit for the glory of God.

We started with questions. I have one more. Are you overcoming or overcome? You are called to faith and to live by faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!