

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part XLII: Galatians - Defending God's Grace As The MEANS Of Righteousness For Man"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

At Nepaug Church, we teach that salvation from sin is only thru faith in Christ, Art. III, Sec. 6, Nepaug Church Bylaws. We also teach that life after salvation is lived through depending on the Holy Spirit, Art. III, Sec. 8! **However, many people differ from these views:**

- (1) Since we have archaeological evidence that man has been around long before Jesus Christ was born, some wonder how people **before** Christ, who never knew Him, ever have hope for life eternal! If those people did not know about Him, it is questioned how **we** can be so sure that salvation **NOW** is by faith in **Him**!
- (2) Liberal theologians for generations have thought that what the historical Jesus or his immediate earthly disciples taught was not nearly "advanced" in the "grace-only" teachings of the Apostle Paul, cf. Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 68. Is a faith-alone gospel thus erroneous?!
- (3) For many centuries, groups in Christendom have taught that eternal life comes by faith **plus** deeds as follows:
 - (a) One group teaches that we must add the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, the mass, penance, extreme unction, orders and marriage to faith to gain eternal life.
 - (b) Another group teaches that unless one is baptized in addition to faith, he cannot enter heaven. It quotes Acts 22:16 as proof, a passage that says: ". . . arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins . . .". It quotes Peter's command to the Acts 2 crowd of "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ." (Acts 2:38)
 - (c) Some say that unless one has spoken in tongues, he does not have the Holy Spirit, so he is thus not saved!
 - (4) Some teach that though one is **initially** saved by **faith alone**, he must **live** righteously or "**fall from grace**" as Gal. 5:4b uses the phrase, thus allegedly **losing** his initial salvation status!
 - (5) Others add that upright living is the product of strong self discipline, a lot of hard work!

Well, what about these views?! HOW does one become acceptable to God, STAY that way, and LIVE uprightly so as to enjoy God's blessing?! HOW CAN WE KNOW FOR SURE?

(We turn to the "need" section of the message . . .)

Need: "Can we be sure that salvation and life is based on God's unmerited favor and not on works or faith plus works?! After all, some say the Apostle Paul created a 'faith-only' belief quite advanced over what Jesus or the other apostles **FIRST** taught (Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 68)! Besides, with so many promoting faith **PLUS** baptism or sacraments for salvation, can we be right?!"

- I. **Throughout world history, a war has waged regarding the false and true MEANS of man's becoming and staying upright before God!**
 - A. Though God created the world and set up man as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. **SINFUL man foolishly TRIED to BETTER his state with SELF EFFORT by making fig leaf aprons, Gen. 3:7!**
 - C. To solve his problem, **God** supplied man with **adequate clothes** by **slaying animals** (Gn. 3:21), picturing the provision of **man's acceptance before God** by the **unmerited favor (grace)** of the **substitutionary death** of God's **Lamb**, Christ, Jn. 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21.
 - D. Yet, throughout history, a spiritual war has waged between **self-help** and **grace** as the **MEANS** of man's obtaining righteous fulfillment:
 1. After the fall, God renewed history by the Noahic Flood, Gen. 6-9.
 2. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's gracious provision, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3: Instead of **trusting** God's **care** and spreading out on the earth as God ordered Noah (Gn. 9:1), Nimrod got men to **stay put** on the plane of Shinar for **self-help group support**, Gen. 11:4.
 3. God chose Abraham to start a nation to check this sin by **leaving** familiar **support** bases to **trust God ALONE**, Gen. 12:1-3.
 4. Yet, Old Testament history records how that nation, Israel repeatedly failed to curb Nimrod's self-help apostasy, but actually became corrupted by that false self-help mindset, Gn. 12:4-Malachi.
 5. Later, when Messiah was rejected by Israel so that God instituted the Church, converts from Judaism promoted self-help error to teach salvation and life by self-help works, Acts 15:1 with Gal. 3:3.
- II. **God used the Apostle Paul to pen Galatians as a TIMELESS charter of the GRACE of God in man's salvation and life on earth:**
 - A. To emphasize his point on God's grace, Paul announced that were he or even an angel from heaven ever to preach any gospel other than salvation by faith alone in Christ alone from beginning to end, he was to be excommunicated from the Church, Gal. 1:1-10 with 3:1-5!

- B. Galatians 1:11-2:21 then defends Paul's attacked credentials as an apostle of God's grace in salvation and living.
1. Paul showed that he **learned** his **gospel** from Jesus Christ Himself **BY DIRECT DIVINE REVELATION**, Gal. 1:11-24.
 2. He reported how his apostleship **later** was **ratified** by the other apostles, including **Peter**, the apostle to the "circumcision," 2:1-10.
 3. He even showed how he had successfully assumed authority **over PETER** to **correct** him on this very **grace-gospel**, Gal. 2:11-21!
- C. Galatians 3:1-4:31 provides various arguments in defense of the **timelessness** of his gospel of justification by faith alone as follows:
1. The Galatians themselves had received the Spirit without works, meaning that faith alone made them acceptable to God, Gal. 3:1-5.
 2. Even **ancient Abraham** was justified by faith alone in the content God had for him to believe in his day, Gal. 3:6-9 with Gen. 15:6.
 3. Paul shows from Moses' Law that its purpose was not to justify, but to condemn so that man might be saved by **faith**, Gal. 3:10-12.
 4. Thus, the **divine blessing** God had promised on **all the world's peoples through ancient ABRAHAM** back in Gen. 12:3b was to come by faith in **Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed**, Gal. 3:13-4:31.
- D. Gal. 5:1-6:10 shows that **just as** man cannot **gain** salvation by works (5:17-21), **SAVED men** must boycott their sin natures to **rely on the Holy Spirit** to live righteously (5:16-6:10).
- III. **Galatians adds to the "thread of redemption" by revealing that through faith, Christ PROVIDES the Abrahamic blessings that God had INITIALLY planned for the WORLD, Gal. 3:13-14!**

Application: *To become righteous, we (1) simply believe on Christ's substitutionary atonement to handle our sin, Ep. 2:8-9. (2) As a believer, we must live apart from self-help works (Gal. 5:16-19) through (a) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) followed by (b) dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the power and motivation to live uprightly, Phil. 2:12f. (3) Since man can operate in righteousness before God **THROUGHOUT HISTORY** based **ONLY** upon **GRACE ALONE**, his salvation and lifestyle in righteousness is by **FAITH ALONE**, the **PRODUCTS** of which are good works, Jn. 5:24; Ep. 2:8-10!*

Lesson: *Salvation from beginning to end has **ALWAYS** been by **GRACE** through **FAITH ALONE** in what God has said based upon the **CROSS of CHRIST ALONE**; believers satisfy God in living righteously only as they rely upon God's provisions to that end in a **LIFE of FAITH!***

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

We can supply answers to questions raised in the introduction:

- (1) Regarding the salvation of people before Christ: believers in different ages are saved by faith in the content that God has supplied for them at the time, though the blood of Christ is previewed by God as grounds of their justification, Rom. 3:25 . See Gen. 15:6 for justification before Christ, and Revelation 7:13-14 for the **future** age! (2) Regarding Liberalism's charge of a novel gospel by Paul, Paul's testimony of getting his gospel **independently** from the other apostles, and having **them VERIFY** his gospel and even be **corrected BY him** (Gal. 1:11-14), all facts the Galatians could have checked for themselves shows that Paul's "brand" of Christianity was the original one! Liberalism deeply errs in teaching a novel gospel by Paul!
- (3) Regarding faith plus the sacraments for salvation: Ephesians 2:8-9 emphatically declares that salvation is by faith alone.
- (4) Regarding "faith-plus-baptism" passages, consider: (a) Acts 22:16 is better translated, "having arisen, be baptized; and wash away your sins, having called on the name of the Lord." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV ftn.) Baptism does not handle sins; when one believes, **God** handles his sins. (b) Peter's call in Acts 2:38 to "repent and be baptized" in view of Eph. 2:8-9 shows that repentance--not baptism--handles sin. To illustrate, we say, "Get on the bus, sit down and go to New York," and mean that one's getting on the bus--not his sitting down on it--produces the result! Many similar passages speaking of faith and baptism together in context are thus explained!
- (5) Regarding tongues speaking & salvation, note 1 Cor. 12:27, 30 where **SOME TRUE believers do NOT** speak in tongues!
- (6) Regarding Galatians 5:4b's "falling from grace," Paul is speaking of a falling from the high plane of grace to a low plane of legalism by depending upon circumcision for salvation, Gal. 5:2-3. (Scripture is misunderstood 9 different ways on this topic, and the pastor has a paper to hand out upon request that explains each verse.)
- (7) Regarding how "tough" the Christian life is to live, there should be no inner self discipline needed for the **motivation** or the **power** to live it, for that betrays futile human effort. The Holy Spirit lives it in power **through** us, enabling us to achieve much with lots of hard work, but as an **overflow** of **His** power and motivation, Gal. 2:20.