

▶ GLENSTONE CHAPEL ◀
Community Group Bible Study Guide

Passage: Galatians 3:1-14

For use April 27-May 3, 2008 (sermon for May 4)

**QUESTIONS TO USE IN GROUP
(OR INDIVIDUAL) STUDY**

LAUNCHING (Choose one or two to introduce passage.)

1. What's your normal reaction ("default option") when someone wants to HELP YOU with a task, project or problem? Choose **one, share with the group if you wish:**

- ___ A. "I can *feel autonomous* if I want to."
- ___ B. "You are so nice; and thank you; and here's how you can help!"
- ___ C. "Go away. I can handle this myself!"
- ___ D. "I think I can handle it, but I'll call you if I need help [meaning it sincerely]."
- ___ E. "I'll call you [but not intending to do so]."
- ___ F. "What? Do I look disabled or incapable? Leave me alone to handle it myself."
- ___ G. Another option? _____

2. "What 'family ties' (blessings and curses) have been handed down to you: Large family? Good health? Baldness? Left-handedness? Forgetfulness? Certain customs?"¹

3. What's one of the more foolish decisions you've made in your life? (Obviously, one which causes you to laugh today!) For example, *allowing your child to get a dog, voting for Ronald Reagan (or Jimmy Carter?), buying that flashy automobile, getting that tattoo.*

UNDERSTANDING Galatians 3:1-14

1. Read aloud the passage, asking the group to **watch for any words which are repeated** and give a clue to Paul's train of thought, e.g. *clearly*.

2. Identify **the persons** mentioned in this passage. What does Paul say about **each one**? How does **Paul's background** play into his presentation of each personage?

3. "What are the implications in the word *portrayed* (vs. 1)?"²

4. What reasons does Paul suggest in this passage for the silly, stupid and irrational thinking and behavior of the Galatians?

5. "How does Paul's calling the Galatians *foolish* relate to Christ's warning: 'But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca," is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.' (Matt. 5:22)?"³

6. Paul presents several either/or scenarios. What are they? What bottom line conclusion does Paul want the Galatians to draw from these contrasts?

7. "What is the 'blessing given to Abraham' (vs. 14)?"⁴ As a group, name several of the blessings.

REFLECTING on Gal. 3:1-14

1. As you swim in the tides and ride the surf of life, what currents might be tugging at your soul to drag you down spiritually?

2. What are our reactions to this quotation from St. Augustine (great Christian thinker from long ago):

"Why do you try to stand in your own strength and fail? Cast yourself upon Him without fear, for He will welcome you and take care of your ills." Agree strongly? Mildly agree? Mildly disagree? Strongly disagree? **WHY?**

3. "What 'Christian' rules seem to be important in your circle? **Why?**"⁵

4. What is it I might be teaching my children that is more Law-oriented than grace-oriented?

FURTHER REFLECTION (on your own)

- "The Christian discovers that he enjoys his greatest liberty when he is most completely enslaved to the Lord Jesus Christ."⁶
- Although Martin Luther was a priest, a monk and a professor of theology, he "... still had not come to enjoy peace with God - until, that is, the magnificent truth of simply trusting in Christ for salvation broke in upon his understanding and he became a changed man, a new creature in Christ, forgiven of sin, justified by faith alone."⁷

Feedback, please! E-mail Dan at NananDrDan@aol.com

FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

³Galatians, *The Gospel According to Paul*, by David K. Huttar, page 87.

⁴Galatians . . . , by David K. Huttar, page 87.

⁵*Serendipity Bible for Groups*, page 1520.

⁶*Unger's Guide to the Bible*, by Merrill F. Unger, page 290.

⁷Galatians . . . by David K. Huttar, page 76.

¹*John, Galatians*, by Serendipity Group, page 46.

²Galatians . . . , by David K. Huttar, page 87.

Passage: Galatians 3:1-14
See also Romans 4.

1. Paul begins his defense of the doctrine of justification like a fierce lion! In no uncertain terms, he gains the attention of the Galatians by questioning the depth of their faith.
 2. **Who's who** in this passage:
 - **Paul.** Old Testament scholar, theologian, very concerned for orthodox doctrine. See also Philippians 3:4-9 below.⁸
 - **Galatians.** Spirit-filled believers but under Paul's censure. Paul considered them to be *fools* (*stupid*, NEB) and *bewitched* (cursed, mesmerized, hexed, crazy) (vss. 1, 3). They were not thinking clearly about *faith* and/or blind to Old Testament theology. They seemed ignorant of implications of Jesus' messiahship for orthodox belief.
 - **Abraham.** Father of the Jewish nation; an example of *faith*; blessed by God; received the great Promise (vs. 8). "He [Paul] speaks of Abraham as the father of believers, and clearly proves that the covenant with Abraham is still in force."⁹
 - **Jesus Christ.** The crucified One; Redeemer for both Jews and Gentiles.
 - **Holy Spirit.** Given to believers (vs. 2) at conversion (vs. 3); received by faith (vs. 14); works miracles (vs. 5)
 3. **Possible outline**¹⁰ *The Failure of Legalism.*
 - Experience of the Galatians, 3:1-5
 - Experience of Abraham, 3:6-9
 - Experience of Habakkuk, 3:11
 - Way of Works, 3:10-14 [salvation by human effort?]
 4. **"Who has bewitched you?"** (vs. 1)
 - "... there were other forces at work ... the Galatians had been duped ... and led astray."¹¹ [Parallel to Adam & Eve, Gen. 3!]
 - "The Galatians do not seem to be any longer in their right minds."¹²
 - "They simply failed to use their minds."¹³
 5. **"... believing what you heard."** (vs. 2)
 - The proper object of *faith* [vss. 6-8, 11, 12, 14] is the Gospel.¹⁴
 - The Galatians had received the Gospel "... by a simple act of accepting the message, uncluttered by the necessity to do anything but repent of their unbelief and embrace the saving truth."¹⁵
 6. **"... because you observe the Law, or because you believe what you heard?"** (vs. 5)
 - "Does the God who lavishly provides you with His own presence, His Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does He do these things because of your
- strenuous moral striving or because you trust Him to do them in you." (Gal. 3:5¹⁶)
7. **"... credited to him as righteousness."**¹⁹ (vs. 6)
 - "Theoretically at least, there are then two ways: the way of faith and the way of works."¹⁷
 - "The covenant of grace as it is revealed in the New Testament, is essentially the same as they which governed the relation of Old Testament believers to God."¹⁸
 8. **"... Abraham, the man of faith"** (vs. 9)
 - "Abraham's faith was a robust faith, believing in the power of God in spite of his own sense of powerlessness because of his and Sarah's advanced age (Rom. 4:19-21; Heb. 11:11-12. He believed in the Lord and His promise in spite of the delay in the fulfillment of the promise (Acts 7:5; Heb. 11:13) and in spite of not knowing what lay ahead in the future (Heb. 11:8; Gen. 12:1).²¹
 - "... all true believers ... [are] the true sons of Abraham. ... In both Testaments faith is the same radical self-commitment to God. ..."²²
 9. **"... God would justify the Gentiles by faith."** (vs. 8)
 - "He [God] planned for the Gentiles to receive [righteousness] as a gift from God."²³
 10. **"The righteous will live by faith."**²⁴ (vs. 11)
 - Paul consistently opposes the idea of justification by works.
 - "... sinful humanity stands in need of a position of righteousness or justification before God."²⁵
 - Paul meant, "Those who are righteous by faith will have life," that is, "Receive God's provision of righteousness through faith, and you will receive eternal life."²⁶
 - *Justification by faith* is a concept that is "... almost totally opposed to the universally human tendency to want to *feel autonomous* ... so that any spiritual benefit we may possess must naturally have been earned."²⁷ [*justification* = "imputing to a person the righteousness of another, that is, by accounting him righteous though he is inwardly unrighteous."²⁸]
 - "*Faith* is equivalent to the contents of faith, that is, to the merits or the righteousness of Christ."²⁹
 - "These texts from Genesis and Habakkuk clearly demonstrate that the way of salvation is ever the same. ... not one way in the Old Testament and another in the New. Rather all the people of God become such through faith in the divine word of promises."³⁰

⁸ Phil. 3:4-9 "... though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ --the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

⁹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 279.

¹⁰ *Galatians, The Gospel According to Paul*, by David K. Huttar, pp. 78-82.

¹¹ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 79.

¹² *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 80.

¹³ *John—Galatians*, Serendipity Group, page 47.

¹⁴ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 78.

¹⁵ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 79.

¹⁶ *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, page 463.

¹⁷ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 77.

¹⁸ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, pages 299-300.

¹⁹ Gen. 15:6 "Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness."

²⁰ *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, page 463.

²¹ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 81.

²² *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 498.

²³ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 77.

²⁴ Hab. 2:4 "... the righteous will live by his faith--"

²⁵ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 77.

²⁶ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 81.

²⁷ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 76.

²⁸ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 511.

²⁹ *Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, page 521.

³⁰ *Galatians ...* by David K. Huttar, page 82.

11. "The man who does these things will live by them."³¹

(vs. 12)

- "Since man always owes God perfect obedience . . . the conditional promise still holds. . . [but] after the fall [of humankind in Eden] no one can comply with the condition."³²
- "There is no connection between law and faith. Law requires obedience, not belief."³³

12. Christ became a curse for us.³⁴ (vs. 13)

- "Christ accomplished for sinners . . . what the Old Testament sacrifices were said to effect for those who brought them, and . . . He accomplished it in a similar way."³⁵
- ". . . our sins are imputed to Christ. . . our sinfulness was transferred to Him . . . the guilt of our sin was imputed to Him."³⁶
- ". . . those who are blessed with God's righteousness are also redeemed from the curse of the law."³⁷
- Christ's death makes salvation possible, ". . . to put men in actual possession of eternal salvation. . . ." ³⁸

13. ". . . the promise of the Spirit." (vs. 14)

- All believers are God's adopted children and as such they are heirs to spiritual blessings, ". . . the most fundamental of which is . . . the Spirit."³⁹
- ". . . the dynamic of the Gospel which produces the ethic [of Christ]."⁴⁰
- Note the parallelism:

". . . that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus . . ."	". . . so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."
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- "The blessing given to Abraham, which is righteousness, is closely connected with receiving the Spirit."⁴¹

14. A comparison between the New Testament and the Old Testament covenants:⁴²

	Old Testament	New Testament
Extent	Particular to Israel; intensified at Sinai	All nations
Emphasis on grace	Less	More
Blessings ⁴³	Less	More (e.g., Holy Spirit)
Proclamation of faith	Same	Same
Status of believers	Same ⁴⁴	Same

³¹Lev. 18:5 "Keep My decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD."

³²Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 218.

³³I John,—Galatians, Serendipity Group, page 47.

³⁴Deut. 21:23 ". . . you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

³⁵Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 365.

³⁶Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 377.

³⁷Galatians . . . by David K. Huttar, page 77.

³⁸Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 395.

³⁹Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 516.

⁴⁰The New Testament, by Merrill C. Tenney, page 286.

⁴¹Galatians . . . by David K. Huttar, page 78.

⁴²Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 300.

⁴³". . . righteousness before God is His chief blessing to Abraham and his spiritual descendants." Galatians . . . by David K. Huttar, page 77.

⁴⁴"Old Testament believers received full justification or forgiveness, though the knowledge of it was not a full and clear as it is in the New Testament dispensation." Systematic Theology, by L. Berkhof, page 267.

Information for community group leaders:

- Gal. 3:15-26, to be studied, May 4-10; sermon on May 11
- Gal. 3:26-4:7, to be studied, May 11-17; sermon on May 18
- Gal. 4:8-31, to be studied, May 18-24; sermon on May 25