

How God Saves People

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[0 : 00] Well, this week I listened to an audio recording that was posted on one of my WhatsApp groups.! It was a recording of a well-known politician.

! And in the audio he said that political parties are like churches,! Because according to him, they both tell the future.

He said churches tell people you do good and you go to heaven in the future. And political parties say, and I guess by what he says you can kind of figure out who this, at least which party this guy belongs to. You vote for me and I'll do good for you in the future.

I guess some of you are not sure. You probably think they'll all do that. And what I found interesting about his statement is that I have no doubt that there probably were believers in the audience who heard him make that statement.

And I doubt there was any objection to what he said. And I was testing this in one of the, actually the same group where this was posted.

[1 : 22] I threw out a question and I said, what do you think about what he said? And do you find anything objectionable in what he said? And I doubt that there was any objection to this gentleman's statement that the message of the church is, you do good and you go to heaven.

And the reason that there probably wasn't any objection or that went over people's head is because the overwhelming majority of people, even those who sit in churches, believe that people who do enough good go to heaven.

And we at Kingdom Life Church don't believe that. But the truth is, we stand with the minority on this issue. The minority in the visible church do not believe that you get to heaven by doing good or being good.

But the majority do. And they do so without thought. They do so with conviction.

One of the largest denominations in the world, the Roman Catholic Church, emphasizes the need to do good works.

[2 : 58] To make it into heaven, eventually, at some point. But what does the scripture say? What does the scripture say concerning this issue?

Who are the people that God saves and will spend eternity with him in heaven? And how does he save them? These questions are answered in this passage that we have come to in Galatians as we continue our extended series in the letter of Galatians.

In Galatians chapter 3. So please turn in your Bibles as we pick up our series in Paul's letter to the Galatians in chapter 3.

And this morning, our attention will be directed to verses 1 through 9. Galatians 3, verses 1 through 9. The Apostle Paul writes, Oh, foolish Galatians!

Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

[4 : 17] 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?

Know then, that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture for saying that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, Preach 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. Let's pray together.

Oh Lord, we do thank you for the privilege of gathering today. Do say, Sunday is the best day of the week. It is the best day of the week, Lord, because we gather and we are reminded of precious truths that we easily forget.

[5 : 49] And Lord, we get to be reminded of those precious truths in community with brothers and sisters who you have saved, who you have redeemed, who you've joined to yourself and you've joined to one another.

And oh Lord, we thank you that part of what we get to do is we get to sit under the instruction of your word. And I do pray that you would, in this moment, use your word to build this church.

Use your word to strengthen our hearts. Oh Lord, use your word to cause us who have come to Christ to grow in our assurance of salvation.

And oh Father, use the preaching of your word to convince those who stand outside of Jesus Christ of their need for a savior. And that savior is your dear son.

So, oh God, we ask that in this moment that you will do what only you can do. We pray that all of the glory will go to you.

[6 : 54] We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. At the very outset of this letter, the apostle Paul challenged and corrected the Galatians concerning their desertion of the gospel and their desertion of Christ.

And then for most of chapters one and two, he sought to prove to them that the gospel that he initially preached to them, which they are turned away from, was the true gospel.

And so now the apostle Paul, as we come to chapter three, is turning his attention back to the Galatians. He addressed them first in the opening verses in verses six through nine of chapter one.

And then he kind of moved away, but now he comes back to them. And he's having a direct conversation with them here in these nine verses that we just read.

And the apostle Paul is confronting them about their doctrinal error. And the point that he makes to them is that salvation is by grace through faith from start to finish.

[8 : 05] That's what Paul is arguing in these nine verses. He is arguing to the Galatians that salvation is by grace through faith from start to finish.

Not just at the start as the Galatians obviously thought, but from start to finish. And Paul makes his case by reminding the Galatians from their own experience, how God actually saved them.

And then teaching them from the Old Testament how God planned to save the Gentiles. So in summary, in these nine verses, the apostle Paul shows how God saves people.

He shows how God saves people in these nine verses. And now remaining time, what I'd like to do is I would like to consider how Paul does that.

How Paul shows that God saves people. And really he does so by discussing two things. First. He discusses God's gift of salvation to the Galatians.

[9 : 20] And second, he discusses God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles. So let's consider Paul's first point of discussion.

God's gift of salvation to the Galatians. Now again, let's remember the context of these words. The apostle Paul had preached the gospel in the region of Galatia.

A Gentile region. People who were far from God, who had no knowledge of God. And many people were saved. And churches were established. However, sometime later, false teachers, Jewish false teachers came in.

And they began to tell the Galatians, well, yes, you're saved, but you also need to keep the law. And in particular, you men need to be circumcised.

Otherwise, you cannot be saved. You need Christ plus keeping the law of Moses in order to be saved. So that was their message. Christ and circumcision and law keeping.

[10 : 29] And many of the Galatian church felt for this error. Many of the Galatian church felt for this because, I mean, after all, when you consider the law of Moses, these things that people are called to do, they are going to help you to be disciplined and help you to lead a particularly distinctive way of life.

And so on its face, it didn't seem like a bad thing. They had Christ and now they can show their deeper commitment by obeying the law and keeping all of its regulations and its requirements.

Well, the apostle Paul becomes aware. And out of his spiritual concern, his fatherly spiritual concern for these Galatians, he writes to them.

And that's how we got this letter of Galatians. Now, at this point in the letter that we have come to this morning, the apostle Paul confronts the Galatians concerning God's saving work in their lives.

And he asked them six questions. His first question to them is, who has bewitched you? Who has bewitched you?

[11 : 38] Paul, in essence, is saying to the Galatians that the only way he could make sense of what they had done, the only way he could make sense of their desertion of Christ and the gospel for the law and legalism is that somehow someone had cast a spell on them.

Someone had bewitched them. Someone had bewitched them. And the reason that Paul asked this question with such great alarm is that he knew that he had fully preached the gospel to the Galatians.

And he knew that he preached Christ crucified in the place of sinners as the basis for salvation. And so in verse one, Paul points to the vividness of his preaching by reminding the Galatians, it was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Now, clearly, the Galatians were not eyewitnesses of the crucifixion. They weren't there. They weren't even in Jerusalem. But what Paul is doing is Paul is pointing them to how vividly he proclaimed Christ crucified.

He was a cross-centered preacher. And he vividly preached to the Galatians, Christ was crucified on the cross for sinners.

[13 : 02] Paul's point is that he preached Christ as a crucified Savior who died as a substitute for sinners so that they can be forgiven of their sins and justified by God.

So he's alarmed that the Galatians can now turn to the law and try to do for themselves what only God through Christ can do. From start to finish, the saved sinners, he says, you must have been bewitched.

And truth be told, they were bewitched. Truth be told, Satan himself is the father of lies and every false doctrine or distortion of the truth has its origin with him and his demons.

Therefore, we must not take false doctrine lightly. It is demonic in origin. It may be espoused by sincere people. But in its origin, it is demonic because it is a distortion of the truth to keep men and women away from salvation.

Now, it seems like for the Galatians, in their mind, they were not abandoning Christ or the gospel by keeping the law.

[14 : 23] They're just adding to it. But Paul had already made it clear in verses 6 through 9 of chapter 1 that their actions was indeed a desertion of the law and not just a desertion of the gospel, sorry, and not just a desertion of the gospel, a desertion of Christ himself.

Because when we add anything to the gospel, it is a desertion of the gospel. It is a nullifying of the gospel. And therefore, it is a desertion of Christ.

But here in these verses, the apostle Paul is challenging the logic of their actions with some sharp questions.

Notice this question in verse 2. Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

That's what I want to ask you. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Now, with this question, Paul takes the Galatians back to their conversion. He calls them to reminisce, to think back on the day when they came out of paganism, when they came out of idolatry, when they came out of serving themselves and living for themselves and they came to Christ.

[15 : 44] He was essentially asking the question, how were you saved? That's the question. Did you receive the Spirit? Did you receive the Spirit?

That's what he really means by that. This question, did you receive the Spirit? It refers to being saved because that's what it means to be saved.

It means that we receive the Holy Spirit. When a person comes to Christ, God gives him or her the Holy Spirit. So Paul is saying, okay, how did that happen?

And the first option he gives to them is, did you receive the Spirit or did you come to Christ by pursuing the works of the law, by performing the works of the law?

He's asked them to consider this. Is that how you got saved? And honestly, as the Galatians thought back, they had to answer no.

[16 : 45] So they were pagans. They were people who were living in darkness and no amount of going to them and saying, I want you to keep the law of Moses, they would allow Paul to scorn.

They just couldn't do it. They knew it wasn't because someone presented the law to them and say, hey, you need to start keeping these laws. And if you do, you'll be saved.

It didn't happen that way. Paul preached and he preached Christ. And God saved them. And they knew that something supernatural took place to bring about their salvation and their conversion to Christ.

And so in response to Paul's question, the Galatians were forced to say, no. No, that's not that's not how we receive the Holy Spirit.

And Paul knew that could only be their answer because he had preached Christ to them himself. So in response to the question, the Galatians then are forced to say that they received the Spirit by hearing the gospel with faith.

[18 : 00] That's how they came to Christ. That's how everyone comes to Christ. There are no exceptions. There are no differences. They all come to Christ the same way.

And you may be aware of this, but there are people who actually are teaching. That Jews who don't know Christ today have some other means of coming to Christ or coming to God, coming to salvation.

There are people who believe that that Jews have some special different salvation. Not so. Not so. Not so. Christ is the only way, the only means of salvation.

Preaching the gospel and responding to the gospel is the only basis upon which the Holy Spirit is given to us as a seal of redemption.

And God claims all those who receive the Spirit as his children. Now, I think after this question, the Galatians were probably thinking, all right, okay, yeah, you're right.

[19 : 06] But what's your point? I mean, what is your point, Paul? I don't get the point. I see the question, but what is your point in asking those two questions?

But Paul's point is stated in verse 3. And it's a logical point. He follows through. He's saying to them, are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? So what he's doing now is he has cornered them to help them to see what they're doing. They have to admit that they received the Spirit by hearing with faith.

They have to admit that something supernatural came about at the beginning of their salvation, at the beginning of their conversion to bring them to Christ. Paul has caused them to admit that.

To say otherwise, they would be lying because it wasn't the law that Paul took to them. Paul brought the gospel to them. They couldn't say he brought the law because he didn't. So they silently have acknowledged that, yeah, okay, it is through hearing with faith.

[20 : 18] And Paul asked this question, okay. So you started in the Spirit. How is it that you now believe that you can be perfected in the flesh?

The New International Version says it this way. After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Paul is saying to the Galatians, what you're doing doesn't make any sense.

You know that when you heard the gospel of Christ crucified for sinners, you believed, and God saved you and gave you his Holy Spirit. And now you're trying in your own human effort through law-keeping to be accepted in God's sight and to achieve final salvation.

Paul says it doesn't make any sense. Why does it make no sense? It makes no sense because salvation is by grace through faith from start to finish.

Not just at the start, but from start to finish. Now in verse 4, the Apostle Paul demonstrates his personal acquaintance with the Galatians.

[21 : 27] And evidently when the Galatians received the gospel, they suffered for it. We don't know the exact circumstances of their suffering, but it is consistent with the Christian experience.

It is consistent that we who receive the gospel, given time, to some degree, in some way, we're going to be persecuted.

We're going to suffer to one degree or another. In countries like ours that aren't openly hostile to Christians, it may be the loss of friends. It may be verbal persecution.

But in hostile countries, countries that are hostile to the gospel, it could be cutting off from family members.

It could be the loss of a job and loss of possessions and even imprisonment and death. And the Galatians experienced something similar.

- [22 : 34] The Galatians experienced a mark of turning to Christ, of genuine and true conversion. And so Paul asked them, did you really suffer so many things in vain?
- If indeed it was in vain? If indeed it was in vain? Now you have to understand Paul's difficulty with the Galatians. And he's using his words very carefully.
- Paul knew he preached the gospel to the Galatians. He knew that God worked in their midst. He knew that many were converted and churches were established.
- Yet he also recognized that they were deserting Christ. They were in the process of deserting Christ. They were keeping the law.
- They were placing confidence in the law. And they were deserting Christ. And they were turning their backs on the gospel. But Paul does not rightly say to them, you're not saved.
- [23 : 36] And I say this to us, that this is something that we must be so careful with. Paul is a wise, tender father as he deals with these Galatians who are in this very iffy place with their salvation.
- But he does not rightly draw the curtain on them and make the call and say, you're not saved. He calls them to consider. Did you really suffer so many things in vain?
- If indeed it wasn't you. He doesn't outrightly say they're not saved, but he makes a statement.
- In essence, what he's saying to them is, if you persist in your law keeping, trying to improve on your salvation, then you are not truly saved. Notice this conditional.
- He's not saying this is the case. He says, if you continue to do this. If you persist in doing this, trying to improve on your salvation. In essence, then you give evidence to the fact.
- [24 : 45] That you really aren't saved. And all the suffering that you went through as a result of your early reception of the gospel was really in vain. If it wasn't.
- If it wasn't. Very delicate confrontation. Of the Galatians. He's alarmed and concerned. But doesn't draw the curtain on them to say, you're not saved.
- He calls them to consider. Was it all in vain? In verse five, Paul turns to the Holy Spirit's work among the Galatians and the undeniable miracles in their midst.
- And he asked them. Is all that by works of the law or by hearing this faith? Here again, the Galatians would have to be honest and say that the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in their midst.
- Was not from keeping the law. But it was from looking to God and trusting God with expectation and faith.
- [25 : 49] The workings of the Holy Spirit among the Galatians were as a result of them. Trusting God. Looking to him in faith to do what only he could do.
- And not by human effort on their part. It wasn't because they kept the law. Galatians knew this. And so Paul was forcing them to consider and rethink their position.
- Notice in verse six that Paul then connects Galatians experience of receiving God's Holy Spirit with the work. Sorry, and the work of the Holy Spirit to Abraham in faith.
- Not to Moses and the law, but to Abraham in faith. And he reminds them that Abraham believed God and was counted to him as righteousness.
- Now Paul makes a very important connection between the Galatians receiving the Spirit and salvation. And experiencing miraculous works in their midst.
- [26 : 53] And Abram's experience with God. Paul says the common thread between the Galatians and Abraham is hearing with faith.

Now it's very easy to read over this. It's very easy to just pass this up. Because we've heard about Abraham a lot and we just kind of pass it up. But Abraham is the most important Old Testament person in terms of salvation history.

Have you ever wondered why the first book of the New Testament begins this way? The book, this is the book of Matthew. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

The son of David. The son of Abraham. Notice that writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew identifies Jesus as the son of David and the son of Abraham in verse 1 of Matthew chapter 1.

And then starting in verse 2, Matthew goes on to give this genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to David.

[28 : 24] And then from David to Jesus Christ himself. Now exactly what is Paul doing as he references Abraham in verse 6?

This quotation in verse 6 is actually taken from Genesis 15 verse 6. And so I want us to turn there to get a better understanding of the importance of this connection that the Apostle Paul makes.

Genesis chapter 15. 1 through 6. Here in Genesis.

God is coming to Abraham to assure him. That he will fulfill the promise that he had previously given to him. Actually at this point his name is simply Abram.

His name was not changed yet. And the promise was to Abram, this old man at the age of 75.

[29 : 33] And he had a wife who was both up in age. He was old. Not as old as him, but old like him. And she was unable to have children. They had no children.

Up to that point in their lives. And God makes him this promise. God says, I'm going to make a great nation of you. And Abram was 75 when he left the land that he was in and set out for this land that God would show him.

But clearly it wasn't easy. It was not easy for Abram to do that. And here in Genesis 15, we can say that Abram was having a bad night.

He was having some difficulties. Things were weighing on him. He probably looked at Sarah and probably considered himself and probably considered the lapse in time.

And he was discouraged. And we see in Genesis 15, in verse 1, it says, After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.

[30 : 44] Fear not. Telling us there was fairness heart. Fear not, Abram. I'm your shield and your reward shall be very great.

But Abram said, Oh, Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless. And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.

A foreigner. And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring. And a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him.

This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars.

If you are able to number them, then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And here's the startling part of this account. Verse 6.

[31 : 54] And Abram, he believed God. He believed the Lord. And he counted it to him as righteousness. What could Abram have done to produce a child?

The logical and honest answer is nothing. If he could have, he would have. There was absolutely nothing that Abram could have done in his own strength and his own ability to bring a child into this world.

this world. But God makes him a promise. God says, I am going to cause your own son, your own child to be your heir. And more than that, I'm going to give you an innumerable company of offspring. Look at the stars and if you can count those stars, that's your offspring. And the marvel of this is he believed God.

And as a result of that, God would perform his word in his life. God counted his belief, his faith to him as righteousness.

And what Paul is doing is Paul is making a connection. He's making a connection to Abram and his circumstances and the impossibility of him being able to produce and bring about what he desired, which was a child. And God promised that he would and Abram believed him. Brothers and sisters, it's no different for us.

[33 : 37] Salvation for us in our own ability is as impossible and as elusive as this child was for Abram.

But when the gospel is proclaimed, that there is a righteousness that can come to believing and repentant sinners, and if they would turn from their sin and they would believe God, that he would save them. Those who like Abram, who believe that God counts it to them as righteousness.

Let's go back to Galatians 3. And so Paul reminds the Galatians that God saves people by grace through faith.

And he does so by pointing to their own experience. You know, the truth is this. Let's not believe for one moment that Abram in his depressed state in that tent where he was, that when God spoke to him, that all of a sudden he just had the ability to have faith. No, even the faith was a gift from God.

Even the faith to believe what God said, that was a gift from God to enable him to believe that. And so it is with our salvation as well, the faith that we exhibit is a gift from God that he gives us to believe that we who deserve to pay for our every sin can be forgiven, can be reconciled to God because of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 23] God enables us by faith to believe that. But not only Paul not only considers God's gift of salvation to the Galatians to prove his point that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works of the law.

Paul also proves the point by pointing to God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles. This brings you to my second and final point. In verses 7 through 9, Paul is making one point, one main point.

And it is that God's plan to justify, his plan was to justify or count the Gentiles righteous would be through faith.

And that's why he dealt with Abram the way that he did. In verse 8, the quote, in you shall all nations be blessed is a quote from Genesis 12 when God first called Abram.

And Paul refers to God's word to Abraham as the preaching of the gospel. And that's exactly what it was.

[36 : 46] Here God goes to Ur of the Chaldees. God goes to this place where they worship the moon. He goes in and he calls one man. Not the whole nation, not everybody. He goes in and he calls one man who was no better, no different from the rest of the people.

He calls him out and he makes this incredible promise to this idol worshiper who deserved to die for his idolatry. He says, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great and you will be a blessing.

What did Abram do to deserve that kindness? Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Notice in verses 7 and 9 Paul says the same thing twice.

In verse 7 he says, know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And then in verse 9 so then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith.

the point that Paul is making is the blessing is to be connected to Abraham through faith not to Moses through the law.

[38 : 22] That's the point that he is making. The Judahs were big on Moses. They were the children of Moses and they promoted Moses and the law but Paul says no. The blessing comes by being connected to Abraham through faith.

And notice how he says that in verse 8. In verse 8 he says in the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preach the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying if you sorry in you shall all the nations be blessed.

Notice that we can actually substitute where blessed is we can put there justified. because he says earlier that God foreseeing that the scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles and now he says in the end that in you all the nations will be blessed.

So to be justified is to be blessed and the way God justifies is through faith. and so Paul's point to the Galatians is that their experience of salvation through faith is consistent with God's plan to justify the Gentiles.

Paul says it's not only your experience that was by faith but also that was God's plan and he takes them back to Genesis and back to Abraham and say this is what God planned all along.

[40 : 01] this is the gospel that was proclaimed to Abraham that through him the man of faith all the nations will be blessed and at this particular point there were no Jew and Gentile this was all the nations they would all come to salvation through a connection with Abraham the man of faith and so Paul challenges the Galatians about their efforts to salvation through your people and brothers and sisters we've been hearing throughout this series that we face the same temptation that the Galatians faced and fell into we face the same temptation we face the same temptation to believe that somehow yeah God saves us but we must maintain our salvation it is almost as if God says okay yeah I've saved you now so here's your salvation and make sure you take care of it so that you could finish in the end and you can make it into heaven but friends that is foreign to scripture foreign to scripture there's nowhere in scripture where God says I pass the baton of salvation after I saved you in the beginning no what scripture says is that he will preserve us to the very end

Jesus says this Jesus says all the father gives to me I will lose none of them and I will raise them up on the last day scripture tells us that those who believe in Jesus Christ they though they die they will they will they will not perish they will not finally perish and so we must not like the Galatians fall for that error to believe that yeah God saves us but we maintain our salvation to the end and whether we finish at the end finally will be dependent on what we do or what we do not do and thank God the work of Jesus is they finished it is a work that is done and that's the only reason we can have a hope and have a confidence that we will stand we will put our trust in Jesus

Christ will stand before God one day and we will be presented faultless blameless for his presence with great joy and so brothers and sisters the journey of salvation starts continues and will be completed in the same manner in which we were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and so this morning if you are like the Galatians you've come to Christ but you're relying on human effort any kind of law keeping what you do what you don't do I encourage you abandon those efforts look fully to Christ for your salvation up to the moment he returns or up to the moment that you breathe your final breath amen let's pray up