

Fact Sheet for **“What is the Replacement
for Law Observance?”**
Galatians 3:1-14

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If you have been with us in the first three sermons on Galatians you will know that this book highlights that we are not justified by works of the Law of Moses but through faith in Jesus Christ (2:16). In the first century when Paul wrote this book there was an intense application of this theology for the new church. You see, the church began among the Jewish people. The Gentiles didn't come into the church until later. And when they did there was a real question about them. Could they really be saved without coming under obedience to the Law of Moses? Some of the Jews passionately insisted that they needed to, and many Gentile believers were being swayed. Paul taught that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone! This application of justification by faith shows up in so much of what Paul wrote (Romans 3:28; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Ephesians 2:14; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 2:14; 1 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:10). Justification by faith is a core truth of Christian theology. But the specific and intense application of this truth by Paul in his day is generally not the same application we see the need for today in Cottage Grove. Now to be sure there are occasions when we can apply justification by faith much like Paul did. The prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventist church, Ellen G. White, strongly taught that unless you worship on the Saturday Sabbath *you are not saved!* Some from the Messianic movement have taught the necessity of following the Mosaic Law in many of the aspects we would consider ceremonial. There are also other occasions when the theology of justification by faith has been and is very important. It was this theology that set Martin Luther on fire for the gospel. And we use it when we are witnessing to someone who believes God can't save someone as bad as themselves. But generally the application of this theology is not something we think about on a day to day basis.

Let me give you something to ponder for the next month. There is an application of this theology where good church people often do poorly, but it is an application that sort of comes around the back side of justification by faith. It has to do with what we use to replace Old Testament Law observance. Do we replace it with nothing and simply celebrate the fact that we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ? Do we replace it with Christian law, a series of do's and don'ts that we cut and paste from the New Testament? In four weeks we will get to a spot in Galatians where we will answer this, but there is a lot of Paul's reasoning that deserves explanation before we get to that spot. Let's get into that reasoning now with a strongly stated rebuke for the Galatians beginning with five questions.

Five Questions (3:1-5)

ESV¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Paul had clearly proclaimed the crucified Christ to them, but their eyes had been diverted to the Law. The word “crucified” is in a tense that isn't just a simple past tense. It is a tense that indicates Jesus' crucifixion was a completed act in the past but has continuing significance for the present. We stand before God now as righteous only because of the righteousness of Christ and His complete payment for sin on the cross for us!

² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain?

Read Acts 14:21-22. The cities mentioned were cities in Galatia

⁵ 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—

Read Acts 14:3, 8-11.

Abraham Was Justified by Faith (3:6-9)

⁶ just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? ⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Abram is getting older, as was Sarah. God still had not given him what he most desired... an heir. There are three times "behold" (see!) shows up in Genesis 15:1-6, and these point up Abram's emotions and God's response, ending with Abram's faith. And as Abraham came before the Law, his righteousness was based on faith, not on Law!

⁸ 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."¹ ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

The Curse of the Law (3:10-14)

¹⁰ 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."² ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."³ ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"⁴-- ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

I'm going to leave you today with a couple of questions to ponder.

If someone has put their faith in Jesus Christ but their life doesn't show it... are they saved? How does your answer square with justification by faith?

In encouraging people to live for the Lord what do you replace Law observance with? And how are you doing in this area?

Keep your thinking cap on as we go through Galatians!

¹ Genesis 12:2-3.

² Deuteronomy 27:26.

³ Habakkuk 2:4.

⁴ Deuteronomy 21:22-23.