

# Salvation by Works is Not Logical

*Galatians 3:19-29*

(Wednesday July 28, 2010)

“The famous British scholar and soldier Lawrence of Arabia participated in the Paris peace talks after World War I. Several Arab leaders came with him to Paris and stayed in the hotel. When they went into their bathrooms they were astounded to discover they could bring seemingly unlimited amounts of water into the bathtub or sink simply by turning the handle on a faucet. When preparing to leave Paris, they removed the faucets and packed them in their luggage, thinking that the faucets themselves magically created the vast amounts of water. When told Lawrence what they had done, he explained that the faucets were useless unless connected to pipes that were, in turn, connected to a source of water” (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, page 97).

The Judaizers that Paul is battling in Galatians thought of the Law as those faucets. They thought they could get life out of the Law without being connected to God the Father through His Son who said, “I am the water of life.” The Judaizers had polluted the Gospel with works.

Paul is Defending the Gospel in Galatians as his overall outline reveals:

1. In Chapters 1-2, Paul gives his Personal Response and Defends his Apostleship.

## **2. In Chapters 3-4, Paul gives his Doctrinal Response and Defends Justification by Faith.**

A. Argument From *Experience* (Galatians 3:1-5) With Six Questions.

B. Argument From *Scripture* (Galatians 3:6-14) With Six Quotes from the OT.

C. **Argument From Logic (Galatians 3:15-29).** The Judaizers’ logic was that salvation was by grace through faith before the Law, but since God gave the Law now salvation included keeping the commandments. Paul rebuts that argument as illogical in 3:15-29.

D. Argument From *History* (Galatians 4:1-11).

E. Argument From *The Heart* (Galatians 4:12-20).

F. Argument From *Allegory* (Galatians 4:21-31).

3. In Chapters 5-6, Paul gives his Practical Response and Defends Sanctification by Faith.

### **I. God’s Promise of Salvation by Grace through Faith is Eternal and Superior (3:15-18).**

A. *Salvation by Grace is Binding (3:15).*

B. *Salvation by Grace is Fulfilled in Christ (3:16).*

C. *Salvation by Grace is Repeated (3:17).*

D. *Salvation by Grace is an Inheritance (3:18).*

### **II. God’s Law was Temporary and Inferior (3:19-29).**

A. *Before Salvation under the Law (3:19-25)*

Paul raises two questions that the Judaizers were sure to ask in objection to his arguments for justification by grace through faith as promised to and experienced by Abraham. The first question was “Why then the Law?” Paul next answers that question.

1. *The Law revealed our Sin (3:19a)*. The Law never was intended by God as a means of justification nor sanctification as the Judaizers preached. The Law was given to make sin a transgression to increase the guilt in order to drive the sinner to Christ.

2. *The Law was Temporary (3:19b)*. Unlike the promise to Abraham, which was eternal and unconditional, the Law was conditional and in effect only until Christ came.

3. *The Law was Given by Mediators (3:19c, 20)*. The Law was first given to angels and then to Moses and to Israel as Acts 7:53 says. The mediators meant that both parties had obligations. In contrast, God personally gave His promises to Abraham directly, face to face, as a Friend to a friend. Only God obligated Himself in the promise of justification by faith.

4. *The Law Prepared us for Christ (3:21-22)*. Paul used two illustrations to show how the Law was given to prepare the sinner for Christ.

a) The Law is a Prison (3:23). The Law found the sinner guilty, imprisoned him, sentenced him to death because “wages of sin is death,” put him on death row, and made him ready to be pardoned by Christ.

b) The Law is a Strict Disciplinarian (3:24-25). The “schoolmaster” was a Roman slave hired to escort the son back and forth to school. The “schoolmaster” was pictured in ancient art as a strict disciplinarian with a rod in his hand. The Law forced the people of God in the Old Testament to obey or be punished. Once the son was old enough, he was no longer under the stern “schoolmaster” but had adult privileges and responsibilities. Paul will now contrast this way of life to being a son of God.

## ***B. After Faith in Christ We***

1. *Are Sons of God (3:26-27)*. Now as adult sons we obey because we love our Father not because we fear a beating from a severe master. John wrote that “there is no fear in love; but perfect or mature love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). As a child, I used to fear disobeying my dad because of the whipping I would get. Now that I am older and our love for each other has matured, I still want to please my dad not because I fearing a whipping but because I don’t want to mar my intimate relationship with him as his adult son. The same should be our fellowship with Christ be.

2. *Are All One in Christ (3:28)*. The Law divided the races and even foods as clean and unclean. But Christ unites. There are no barriers to our fellowship with Christ or one another racially, socially, sexually. These were radical words penned by Paul. In the first century, Jewish men would daily pray, “I thank God that I am not a Gentile, slave, or woman.” Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote, “Woman is inferior to man in every way.”

J. Vernon McGee responded to first century prejudice, “Any man in Christ is my brother and I do not care about the color of his skin. It is the color of his heart that interests me. There are a lot of white people walking around with black hearts, my friend, and they are not my brothers.”

3. *Are Heirs of Abraham's Seed (3:29)*. Because we are in Christ, we are the heirs of the universal promise of salvation by grace to Abraham. We are heirs according to the promise not the Law.