

Galatians 3:1-14 ESV

How Is a Person Saved – *by Doing Good or by Believing in Jesus?*

Let's forget about our thoughts and our feelings; *what does the Bible say?*

Sunday, October 26 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, October 27 at 7 PM

Reformation Day – 2014 (observed; the actual day is October 31, 1517)

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Now we live, one day we will die; then what? *Eternal joy or eternal torment!* Most people agree on their *desire* for eternal joy, *but many are confused about **the way** to eternal joy.* According to our *human reason* it makes sense that God would welcome only those who *do good*; however, Jesus said: **“No one is good except God...”** (Mk 10:18). Since that is true, *God promised to save the world through His Son; then He did it!*

A short time later, God opened the eyes of Paul to see His saving truth, so Paul wrote: **“...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... [Then Paul added:] ...if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”** (Gal 2:16, 21 ESV) But we know His death had a purpose – *to remove our sins!*

Since we must be justified, people try to justify themselves:

- By emphasizing the good they have done.
- By rejecting responsibility for their sins.
- By denying the reality of sin.

But what is the problem? **“...a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ...”**

About 500 years ago God opened the eyes of Martin Luther to see that **we are justified by faith, not by works!** So ♦the

Bible, ♦Paul, and ♦Martin say we are saved **by faith alone**. We now go further into that topic by focusing on Galatians 3:

1. Paul Appeals to the Experience of the Galatians:

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. // Paul was shocked that the Galatians would *even consider a return* to their works for their salvation, so he said: Who has cast a spell on you? He also reminded them of how he had pictured Jesus as the Christ, *who was crucified to save us!*

- a. **² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?** // He wants them to think back to their conversion; it was NOT by works, *BUT by faith!*
- b. **³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** // God does MUCH MORE than start us down the right path; He ♦makes us sorry, ♦unites us to Jesus, and ♦keeps feeding us through the Word!
- c. **⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain?** // The Galatians, *like many Christians, were persecuted*; they chose to suffer rather than reject Jesus – *because they knew He was their Savior!* But if they turned away, *their suffering would be for nothing!*
- d. **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—** // So they had the Spirit and miracles had taken place; was that because of their works? *By no means!*

2. **Paul Brings Scriptural Proof for His Position:**

- a. ⁶ **...Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”** [Gen. 16:6]? ⁷ **Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.** // The teaching of Jesus and Paul, *that we are saved by faith*, was not new; 2,000 years earlier Abraham was *counted righteous by faith*, not by works! So what about us? We are also counted righteous *by faith!*
 - b. 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.”** (Gen. 12:3) // So how did God work through Abraham to bless all nations? By sending His Son into the world as a *descendant of Abraham*; then Jesus ♦lived for everyone and ♦died for everyone *for the purpose of saving everyone!* Jesus’ work is finished; we must receive Him ***by grace through faith!***
 - c. ⁹ **So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.** // Think back: The Jews had the law, which showed them ♦how to honor God and ♦when they fell short, *but the law was never given to save the Jews or anyone!* **“Men of faith are heirs of salvation, not men of works.”** (Kretzmann, 240)
3. **Paul Tells the Bad News for All Who Trust in the Law:**
 - a. 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**

- b. **Book of the Law, and do them.”** (Deut. 27:26) // If you want to earn your way to heaven, *just keep all of God’s law perfectly!* BUT, *since no one can do that*, all who try are under God’s curse!
- b. ¹¹ **Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”** (Hab. 2:4) ¹² **But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”** // Notice the division: **Law** is on one side – *live it perfectly and earn heaven!* **Gospel** is on the other side – *believe in Jesus who lived it perfectly for us!*
- c. 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”** (Deut. 21:23)-- 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.** // Since sin brings God’s curse, Jesus willingly received our sin and God’s curse. Now, *through Him*, we are redeemed – we are back in God’s holy family through faith in Jesus!

Conclusion: The Bible is so clear: We are NOT saved by what we do, BUT through JESUS! And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

Response: Let us **(1)** trust in Jesus alone for heaven; **(2)** feed on the Bible every day; and **(3)** help others know this essential truth: Trust in works = condemnation, *but trust in Jesus = salvation!*