

Galatians 3: What is the hearing of faith?

3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? You have to make a choice. Who is in control of your life? What is a slave? It is a person who does not control their life, they don't make the choices for what is right. To be "free" is to take control and make your own choices. Jesus chose to go to the cross, it wasn't forced on Him, it was His choice. He made this very difficult choice because this was the way to achieve something He cared about. We also must take up our cross and follow Him. The Christian life is all about learning how to do things you thought you couldn't do. Choosing to be crucified to save us is the perfect example of what it means to be "free". What is a "cult"? It is a group of people who appear to have been bewitched because they give the leader of this "cult" control over the choices in their life. In a cult what is reinforced is not that you should believe the words spoken by the Lord, but rather that the leader of the cult believes the words and that is why you allow this person to control your life. It is foolish and it is amazing that people could be bewitched like this. What really stood out to Europeans that visited the US in the first hundred years was how independent Americans were, making choices for themselves. Paul reveals a very interesting secret about how his mind works. He knows that his salvation was completely based on Jesus crucifixion, so in his mind he is playing a video of that crucifixion, the "clear portrayal" of "Jesus Christ crucified" and then he examines that video to answer questions like "how did I receive the spirit". **3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?** The

Judaizers were trying to get the Galatians to finish by means of the flesh. You need to be circumcised in your flesh, if you are then you get to sit at the table with the apostle, then you get a voice and everyone listens to you. The entire point of the Lord's crucifixion is that He listened to everyone, even the thief on the cross. Everyone had a voice and He listened to everyone which is why He told John to "behold your mother". He could empathize with how His death was going to impact John and His mother. When I hear these protests for BLM what I really hear is that their voices have not been heard, they have not been given an opportunity to speak, and they feel ignored. There is a comparison between the crucifixion which is the circumcision of the heart and the circumcision of the flesh. The crucifixion demonstrated that we have a voice, God listens to our needs, and it demonstrates that the Lord is sensitive to our needs. This is how the church will finish our course. This also reveals an interesting facet to Paul's mind. He is always connecting the dots of his experience, his life is a narrative. He realizes how he began, it was by repenting and receiving the work Christ did for him on the cross. Then he asks how will he continue on this journey, is he going to go back to the approach that he just repented of? That would be foolish. **4 Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?** We must feel our work is meaningful, it is not in vain. Second, we need to focus on our experiences, learn from them, turn them into a narrative, so that they can guide us going forward. **5 So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?** If we are listening to each other we can summarize what we heard, we can answer questions, we can admit when we don't know the answer to a question. Once again, look at the example in chapter 2, everyone was able to speak, everyone was able to express how they felt, and they listened to one another. Peter's epistle makes it clear that he heard Paul. How many times

does Paul need to ask us if we believed what we heard? What is distracting them? Where is their focus? Is it the great apostle Peter? Is it that some have come from James, the brother of Jesus? There is a temptation to put your Christian life on autopilot. I'll follow Peter, I can trust him. I'll follow the brother of Jesus, I can trust him. This is the slave mentality, you need someone else to direct you. So again, consider Paul's experience. He was struck blind when he heard the Lord say "why do you persecute Me?" He responds meekly "who are you?" This is his repentance, he realizes he didn't even know God yet he was running around arresting people thinking he was serving God. One brother comes in, lays hands on him, and says "receive your sight". He had asked "who are you Lord" and now he can see this brother. The Lord struck him blind and also removed the scales from his eyes, that was the miracle, but what caused that power to be transmitted from the Lord, through that brother to Paul is that they all "believed what they heard". What is it that Paul believes? He believes that this brother is one with Jesus, that he is the "body of Christ". **6 So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."**

Abraham believed God about what? About taking his son, his only son, and sacrificing him. Put yourself in Paul's shoes, God tells him to withstand Peter and James. These are the two chief apostles, James is the leader of the church and brother to Jesus, Peter is the leading apostle. Who is Paul to withstand them? The battle is over what? The church that he has raised among the gentiles. This is his only son. He could have felt like Abraham in being told to sacrifice his only son. I know people who dislike any conflict, especially in the church. They would be afraid to withstand anyone who had a reputation, whatever it is. They look at the flesh. This person has known Jesus his entire life, much longer than I have, he must be right. Even Barnabas who was well versed in the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles was swayed by them. But when Paul stood up against the Judaizers

it wasn't a destructive conflict but a productive one. You cannot believe what you heard unless someone speaks. This goes both ways. Paul gave Peter the respect and consideration to treat him the same way he wanted to be treated. Paul received the Spirit because he believed what he heard and he also trusted that Peter would receive the same spirit by believing what he heard. If we have a conflict we need to speak. In the church we need to have an environment where everyone can speak, Jews and Gentiles, male and female, slave and free. We need an environment where everyone can hear everyone, where the "great apostle Peter" can hear Paul who was less than the least of all saints. This reveals another secret about how Paul's brain works. He is correlating his salvation experience with Abraham's. He is using the Old Testament stories as a mental model for his own walk. **7**

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of

Abraham. This is what it means to be children of Abraham. Paul took a chance, risked sacrificing his only son, but it was not in vain. It was credited to him as righteousness and he was walking as a child of Abraham. Ananias had faith to lay hands on Paul, that indicated he was a child of Abraham. **8**

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." There were seven blessings associated with the

covenant that God made with Abraham. The seventh and culminating blessing is that "all nations will be blessed in you". This is why I say that BLM can be blessed "in believing Abraham". This is why I say that the New Testament is a covenant that rescues us from this evil age and also empowers us to rescue all nations from this evil age by showing them the way of salvation. How does Paul come up with this? He is considering his experience and also the Old Testament stories. Now he has a question, where does it say that God would justify the Gentiles? If I can't answer this we could all be going the wrong way. He then sees that is the seventh

blessing to Abraham, it is there, as part of the original covenant God made with Abraham. **9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.** Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. If you “rely” on faith you must rely on the word of God. You have to meditate on the word, pray over the word until you can hear that word being spoken to you by God. Fellowship with others, hear the word of God in their speaking, in their preaching. **10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”** When someone gives you a command, you are cursed if you don’t obey, but you are not righteous if you do. This is known as head covering. Suppose I was in the Marines, given clear orders and did them, and yet many men died. I am not righteous, but I am also not cursed because I was following orders. And sometimes it can be extremely difficult to “follow orders”. Think about Ruth, she is a Moabitess. According to the law she can’t enter the congregation to the tenth generation. That means her kids will be excluded from the fellowship. The guardian redeemer knew this law so refused to marry Ruth. However, Boaz did marry Ruth and they were the great grandparents of King David. Why didn’t Ruth’s kids get excluded to the tenth generation? Because the law also says that the next of kin is to marry the widow of an Israelite. Ruth had two statuses, one was a Moabitess and the other was the widow of an Israelite. So what do you do in this situation? God judges the heart. In the very first chapter Ruth tells us “your God will be my God and your people will be my people”. According to her heart she was a widow of an Israelite. **11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”** On the other hand if I took actions that were extremely risky, violated all kinds of common sense for the military, as Macarthur’s landing at Inchon did, yet I did that based on faith. Then it would be seen

as righteousness. Because of the tides it was an extremely risky move to land his forces at Inchon because the initial group would be stranded for hours before more boats could arrive. However, MacArthur realized that the North Koreans would also see this the same way and view it as a wall that the enemy could not breach. As a result he felt if done correctly they could make the landing before the North Koreans realized it because they wouldn't be guarding it that carefully. He was right and it resulted in the very rapid defeat of the North Koreans in South Korea. Prior to the attack everyone thought he was making a terrible mistake, afterwards everyone agreed he was right and that he wasn't relying on general principles but on faith. Boaz was also relying on faith, and Ananias was relying on faith. How foolish it would be for Paul to begin his Christian life based on the hearing of faith and then try to finish the race with the works of the law. Based on the works of the law Ananias would never have laid hands on Paul and Boaz would never have married Ruth. **12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will 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 hung on a pole."**

A slave does not have the right to walk by faith. The master tells you what to do and you had better do it. Just like Balaam's donkey. The donkey could see the angel of God that was guarding the way and tried to avoid him. Balaam kept beating the donkey for not obeying him until his eyes were opened to see the donkey had saved his life. We have been redeemed. We are no longer cursed to live like a slave to the rules and orders of this law. In the previous chapter the Gentiles being "second class citizens" in the church, that is a curse. If your job is to live according to all the rules that the Judaizers give you then your voice will be silenced. When MacArthur suggests to try landing at Inchon he will be silenced because this idea violates the rules. We don't walk by faith, we walk by the dictates of those

who "know these rules". George Floyd was not the first person killed while being restrained by police. No, the trigger was that people finally stopped being so foolish and realized that these rules were a curse. I think that MacArthur was famous for one thing, he had the fewest men die under his command relative to the amount of men they killed. I think the ratio was 10 Japanese died for every American. Whereas he exemplified a General who walked by faith, the Japanese exemplified those who lived by the law. One of the things he did was to skip many of the Islands that the Japanese had taken and set up defenses on. As a result he was able to cut their supply lines, ignore many battles, and retake land in the Pacific at a spectacularly fast rate. Meanwhile these Japanese stayed on these islands according to their commands and twenty years after the war was over you could still find some poor Japanese soldier "holding down the fort". What a great expression "cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole". These Japanese soldiers still fighting on remote islands 20 years after the war is over, they are "hung on a pole". It is as though one simple little rule has ruined you so that you are forever stuck in one place, unable to think or act rationally. **14 He redeemed us in order 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.** The promise of the Spirit refers to the blessings of the covenant. This is a very big topic and Paul covers it in the book of Ephesians where he goes into the seven blessings we have received. These blessings are given to us through our covenant, and the book of Galatians is all about how we receive this covenant. Abraham signed the covenant he had by circumcision. It was a sign on his flesh that they had a covenant of God. We receive our covenant by receiving Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Jesus Body and Blood are the signs that we have received this covenant. It is called a testament because to go into effect Jesus had to die. Therefore it is the death of Jesus on the cross which is the

proof of our covenant with God. Jesus redeemed the Gentiles to fulfill the promise made to Abraham. Jesus' death on the cross is part of the original covenant. That means that walking by faith is also part of the original covenant. **15 Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. 17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.**

Great example. In the United States our covenant is the constitution. No law is legal if it is unconstitutional, that is, if it violates the contract that we have. This constitution was not made simply to those people alive at the time but is still in force as long as the United States is a country. The constitution also had promises of liberty and justice for all. In the same way our covenant was enacted when Jesus died and no one can come in later and change that. So then, why does Paul keep talking about Abraham and the old testament? The New Testament was prefigured in the Old testament. Our being rescued from this evil age was prefigured in the Jews being rescued from Egypt. Walking by faith versus walking by the curse of the law was also prefigured and Paul will talk about that. This is the mental model we need in our walk. Doing this allows us to be very fine in our reading of the Bible, to really hear the very subtle distinctions like the promise to Abraham's "seed" rather than "seeds". Paul was able to see that this promise to "Abraham's seed" was a promise of Jesus Christ. **18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.** I think if you ask Christians they will tell you the gospel is about being

saved, but what does that mean? Some will talk about being saved from eternal damnation, but how many will talk about receiving our inheritance? Our inheritance is the blessings of the Spirit. The first blessing is to get a vision of our inheritance, to see all that we will inherit. This includes that God will make a great nation of us. We will receive a great name. We have been blessed to bless others. Those that bless you will be blessed and those that curse you will be cursed. Finally, all the nations will be blessed in us. This was given to Abraham through a promise, not by keeping the law. Think about it, the blessing is to make a great nation out of slaves, you don't need to be a great nation first, otherwise what would be the point? The blessing is to make your name great, you don't need a great name first, otherwise what would be the point? These promises don't depend on the law, no, God giving them to us by promise is the grace of God. **19 Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed To whom the promise referred had come.** These promises weren't made to me, or you, or Moses. They were made to Abraham's seed. Not "seeds" but "seed". These promises were made to Jesus Christ. The law was a stop gap measure until Jesus Christ came. An egg shell is also a stop gap measure until the chick is hatched. Man fell at the time of Adam, Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness and God made a covenant with him to bless his seed. But that seed would not come for another 40 generations. **The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator.** God gave the control of the law to angels and mediators. The law only works when we trust everyone involved to have our best interests at heart. If I trust those people who are giving the law and mediating the law, then it can help bring me to Christ. **20 A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one. 21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life,**

then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. So the proper application of the law does not oppose the promises of God. But there is no law that is going to tell the general to try landing at Inchon, there is no law that instructed Paul when he should withstand Peter before them all. Abraham is not going to sacrifice His only son unless he has the hearing of faith. MacArthur's righteousness was because of his faith. Abraham's righteousness was due to his faith, Paul's righteousness was due to his faith. **22 But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.** All of the promised blessings in the New Testament are dependent on receiving the word by faith and are only available to those who believe. **23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.** The Judaizers were "guardians". They wanted the church to be under their control. But Jesus Christ is the head of the church, we are no longer under these third party guardians. Paul was taught the Old Testament by Gamaliel, and we can see how he uses that teaching as a mental map for his walk of faith. It helped to lead him to Jesus, but once he got the vision of Jesus he wasn't guided by these weak rules, he was guided by Jesus, by His ministry, and by the clear portrayal of Jesus crucified on the cross. **26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** When Paul stood up to Peter and to those who had come from James he was standing as a child of God, a brother who had clothed himself with Christ. Our standing in the church is that we are children of God, not that we are "great apostles" or "the brother of Jesus in

the flesh". Your authority is that you are clothed with Christ, not in yourself, or in your natural man. **28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** This is a revolutionary message, not just for Paul's day but for this entire age. This deals with civil rights based on race, religion, status, and gender. Enslaving the "working class" is the traditions of men. **29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** This revelation that we belong to Christ, that we are Abraham's see and that we are heirs according to the promise is critical. Yes, Peter is and James is too. But when you stand at the judgement seat of Christ you can't say "I was just following Peter" or "I was just following James". That will not be reckoned as righteousness.