

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 16, 2018
Lesson Title: "True Life"
Lesson Passage: Galatians 3:1-14

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Paul continues to defend his gospel against the attacks of the legalists, appealing to the personal experience of the Galatians, using Abraham as an example, and showing how faith in Christ has superseded obedience to the law in God's provision of salvation.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Tell what Paul meant by "righteousness." (2) Explain what Paul meant when he referred to the law as a "schoolmaster" or "custodian."

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Ask class members to recall what was said about the meaning of "justify" in last week's lesson. Observe that Paul continues to use this term as one of the key words in his doctrine of salvation in Galatians 3.

Then, to further illustrate the meaning of "justify," discuss the use of the term in printing, typewriting and computer commands today.

EXAMPLE: The left margin of this page is "justified." The right margin is not. To justify a margin is to "bring it into line" vertically. Apply this to Paul's theological use of "justification": To be "justified" is to be "brought into line" with God's standard of righteousness. And that can never be achieved by our own efforts; it can't be accomplished by trying to keep the requirements of the law. That is the basic point Paul is trying to get across in Galatians, and especially in Galatians 3.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Outline Paul's basic arguments in Galatians 3:1-14:*

- THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE SHOULD SHOW THEM THE TRUTH (3:1-5)
- ABRAHAM PROVED THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES THROUGH FAITH (3:6-9)
- THOSE WHO RELY ON WORKS OF THE LAW ARE UNDER A CURSE (3:10-14)

2. *Call attention to the five rhetorical questions in Gal. 3:1-5:*

(1) *"Who has bewitched you?"* (to turn them away from the gospel of the cross, which was presented so clearly to them)? (2) *"Did you receive the Spirit* (something they had undeniably experienced) *by the works of the law, or the response of faith?"* (They knew, of course, that it was the latter.) (3) *"Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?"* (They were made righteous by the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives; why should they assume that they must now depend upon their own efforts to stay righteous?) NOTE: "Ending

with the flesh" is close in meaning to what is thought of today as "secular humanism." It refers to the efforts of man alone, without reference to God. (4) "Were all your experiences (at the beginning of the Christian life) in vain?" (5) "Does God supply the Spirit and work miracles among you by works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" (The answer should be obvious to them on the basis of their own Christian experience.)

3. Ask class members to summarize the point Paul is making in his reference to Abraham in 3:6-9. Note that the key is in 3:6: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (a quote from Gen. 15:6.) Observe that this happened long before the law was given to Moses. "Reckoned" is a bookkeeping term--God credited righteousness to Abraham's account. Explain the meaning of "righteousness" (v. 6) as follows: A fundamental fact about God is that He is righteous; righteousness is rooted in His very character. He accomplishes His righteous purpose by being Himself. It is sometimes said, "God can do anything." But there are some things God cannot do. He cannot lie, cheat, steal, break promises or practice wickedness in any form, for these things would be inconsistent with His righteousness. To be righteous is to "be right" with God by participating in His righteousness. But we can never attain this righteousness on our own; we can only share in God's righteousness, as Abraham did, through faith.

4. Explain the line of argument in 3:10-14 ("THOSE WHO RELY ON WORKS OF THE LAW ARE UNDER A CURSE"): (1) Old Testament scripture (Deut. 27:26) pronounces a curse upon everyone who fails to keep the whole law. (2) Therefore, since no one has ever been completely obedient to the law, no one is justified before God by the law (Gal. 3:11). (3) But, by his death on the cross, Christ has freed us from the curse (Gal. 3:13).

CLOSING THE LESSON

A FINAL THOUGHT: Paul's conclusion that "all who rely on works of the law are under a curse" (Gal. 3:10) is self-evident when you consider the fact that there are 613 commandments in the Torah, the law of Moses. It would be humanly impossible to go through life without violating a single commandment, or even several of them. What, then, was the purpose of the law? Paul answers this question in Galatians 3:24: "The law was our schoolmaster (KJV) until Christ came." EXPLANATION: The word translated "schoolmaster" is the Greek term *paidagogus*. A *paidagogus* was a slave who was put in charge of a boy's discipline and education. The *paidagogus* led the boy to school, then brought him back home when his instruction was over for the day. He was responsible for keeping the boy out of trouble. Paul is saying that the law was like a "pedagogue" in that it kept men under restraint until Christ came to set them free. Now, in Christ ("now that faith has come") they no longer need the disciplining of the law (the "pedagogue") because they have become full-grown sons of God through faith (v. 26). As one new convert told his former drinking buddies, "I can do anything I want; but Christ has changed my wanters."

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