

Nothing but the Blood (Part 7)

Galatians 3:1-14

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Last week we learned that salvation is secured by Jesus' first coming and will be completed at His second coming. Justification occurs at conversion when we first believe in Jesus. This is when our inner man is renewed. Glorification occurs when Jesus returns. This is when our outer man will be renewed. It is clear that these two events can only happen through faith, because they can only be accomplished by God, not by our own effort. But between these events is the process of sanctification, when we are being made more like Jesus. It's easy to think that we can accomplish this by our own effort, that if we try hard enough we can train ourselves to break bad habits and discipline ourselves to be godlier. This is the misconception that Paul rebuked the Galatians for. But this is not how sanctification works. We might be able to change superficially to some small degree by being disciplined, but we must realize that our outer man is damaged so much that we cannot overcome the desires of the flesh on our own. Like justification and glorification, sanctification is by faith. We must entrust ourselves to Jesus and let Him transform us.

The entire process of salvation is by faith. Furthermore, in Galatians 3:6-14 Paul asserts that salvation has always been by faith from the beginning, and he uses Abraham as an example. When Abraham believed God's promise, it was credited to him as righteousness, in other words he was saved through faith in God (Genesis 15:1-6). And this salvation occurred before he did any works of obedience, like circumcision and the offering of Isaac. Although Jesus had not yet been incarnated, those in the Old Testament were still saved by faith, not by works. It is a mistake to think that in those days salvation came through the Law, and that Jesus only had to come because Israel failed to obey the Law. Jesus was not just a backup plan. If salvation came through the Law, God wouldn't have sent His only Son. Jesus was sent because He was the only way mankind could be saved. We see in Deuteronomy 28 that obedience to the Law does not lead to salvation, but rather leads to peace, prosperity, and fertility. These are all physical, temporal, outer man blessings. None of these have to do with salvation or eternal life. Such spiritual blessings, on the other hand, are not earned, but rather are received through faith. We can call ourselves spiritual children of Abraham because we received salvation through faith as

he did. Thus in Galatians 3:11 Paul quotes from Habakkuk, saying that the righteous will live by faith.

During Jesus' ministry, He taught to feed the inner man and performed miracles healing the outer man. But all those who were physically healed still died eventually because their outer man was not renewed. Yet those who had faith in Jesus had their inner man renewed and a guarantee that their outer man would be renewed upon His return. The transformation of the inner man and resurrection of the body is received by faith. These are the spiritual and eternal blessings that cannot be gained through obedience to the Law. Yet how often do we confuse the temporal blessings of the Old Covenant for the spiritual and eternal blessings of the New Covenant? Ephesians 1 says that we have already received all spiritual blessings. We received it through faith in Jesus. This spiritual blessing has been given because we are now in a right relationship with God through Jesus. Don't try to determine whether God is pleased with you based on the temporal blessings you have or lack. Don't place yourself under the Law once again by thinking that you must obey God in order to gain His favor. For it is a burden that none of us could carry, since our disobedience always outweighs our obedience. It is only by faith that God's favor is bestowed upon us, resulting in the outpouring of all spiritual blessing. God is pleased with us because Jesus has covered us and washed away our sins, so instead of seeing our sinful selves, God sees Jesus' righteousness.

We already received spiritual blessings, but in this life we may still suffer because of the brokenness of our flesh and of this world, not because God is displeased with us. But God promised to send Jesus once again to fix the world and our bodies. In v. 14 and in Ephesians 1:14 we see that God gave us the Spirit as a guarantee (*arrabon*) of the completion of the salvation process. The Holy Spirit is like an engagement ring, which guarantees a marriage. So though we struggle now with our decaying outer man, let us hold onto our faith in Jesus and the promise of His return. Let us live today by faith, allowing God to work in us through His Spirit, from whom we receive confidence of our final deliverance.