

Nothing but the Blood (Part 11)

Galatians 3:26-29

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In Galatians 3, Paul was telling the Galatians how foolish they were to turn away from the gospel of grace back to the old system, which was a cold and exacting rules-based contract, and did not reflect God's character. The Law was not intended to bring salvation and it was only temporary. It was a babysitter that led Israel to Jesus, the only One who could save. Once Jesus came, the role of the Law was over. It only pointed to Jesus, through whom we see God perfectly.

Paul concludes in vv. 26-29 by stating that faith is greater than the Law because it fully blesses those who are undeserving. The Galatians were undeserving because they foolishly turned away from the gospel towards an old system that was incapable of bringing eternal life (vv.1-3). They abandoned and betrayed Jesus. They were just like Israel, who after their deliverance turned against God. But consider that we are no different than they. Every time we are selfish, proud, judgmental, or impatient we are also rebelling against God. Every sin we commit against someone else is a sin against God. We are just as childish and foolish as Israel was. And just like the Galatians we often forget the power of God's grace and impose legalistic practices on ourselves and even worse, on others.

Second, the Galatians were undeserving because the Law revealed how sinful they, and Israel as a whole, were. The Law wasn't impossible to keep. The rules were extensive and particular but not impossible. The Law made provisions for the atonement of sin by animal sacrifice in the case someone broke a command. If someone really tried to follow the Law, they could, but throughout most of Israel's history they didn't even want to. And this speaks to the rebellion that is present in all humanity.

Finally, the Galatians were undeserving because they misunderstood the character of God. By thinking they could earn salvation by following rules, they showed that they thought of themselves too highly and thought of God too lowly. No amount of rule-following could make us as righteous or holy as God. It's like a lizard who thinks that by jumping as hard as it can, it could become just like an eagle. No amount of effort can make us like God. This is what the Mormons get wrong. They think God was once like us and one day we can become just like God. The truth is we can never earn our way to becoming even close to the way God is. And yet how

often do we have this same misguided attitude about ourselves? We make excuses for our own sins but condemn others for every mistake, and attribute it to them as character flaws. We have a different standard for others compared to ourselves. And in this pride we make the same mistake as the Galatians did.

But despite being so undeserving, God fully blesses us. Verses 26-29 say that we have been made children of God, and heirs to the promise. We had no place being in God's family, but He made us full heirs. When I coached volleyball I got to know a family with three children. The parents decided to adopt three more Chinese children, and changed their will to include all six children equally. There was no distinction made between the biological and adopted children. And so it is with us Gentiles, who were included into God's family. Now there is no distinction between the original children (Israel) and us Gentiles. We are now treated as children of Abraham, as full heirs. We sometimes do not appreciate how blessed we are to be included, not just because we are undeserving, but because we are not Israel. Israel was always God's people, but we were adopted.

In vv. 26-28 Paul repeatedly uses the word "all" to emphasize that both Jew and Gentile are included. In v. 28 he lists three dichotomous pairs. The Jews, the freed, and the males were likely to think they were entitled to the inheritance already. But to the Gentile, the slave, and the women Paul says that they are also equally included. God doesn't play favorites. We Gentiles are the riff raff picked up from the street and invited to the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-10). We are the dogs that receive the crumbs from the master's table (Matthew 15:22-28). We must recognize that we are undeserving and have no right to inherit the kingdom, and only then will we fully appreciate the grace of God. There is this well-known anecdote about cat and dog theology. The master provides everything for the cat so it thinks it must be God, but when the master provides everything for the dog, it thinks the master must be God. Don't be like the cat. Instead realize that God is so awesome for blessing you even though you don't deserve it. Don't be proud, but rather imitate the humility of Jesus on the cross who put others before Himself. With humility, let us acknowledge that we are undeserving, but that God fully and graciously provided us with all blessing.