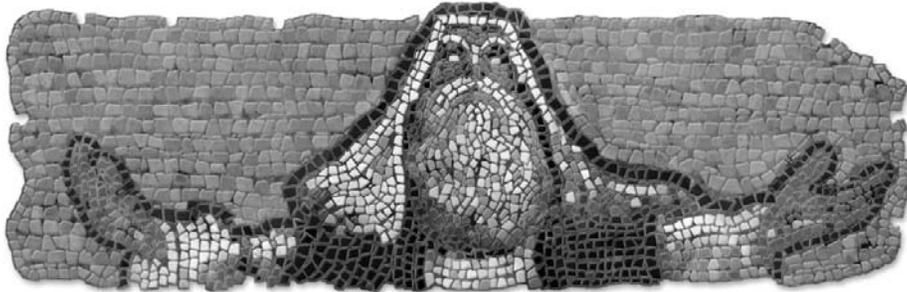


# Old Testament Faith



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 22

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Galatians 3:1–14; Romans 1:2; Romans 4:3; Genesis 15:6; Genesis 12:1–3; Leviticus 17:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Christ set us free from the curse of the law. He did it by becoming a curse for us. It is written, ‘Everyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse’ ” (Galatians 3:13, NIV).

**“A LITTLE BOY MADE A LITTLE BOAT.** He painted it and fixed it up beautifully. One day someone stole his boat, and he felt terrible. In passing a pawnshop one day, the boy saw his boat. Happily he ran into the store and said to the shop owner, ‘That is my little boat.’ ‘No,’ said the pawnbroker, ‘it is mine, for I bought it.’ ‘Yes,’ said the boy, ‘but it is mine, for I made it.’ ‘Well,’ said the pawnbroker, ‘if you will pay me two dollars, you can have it.’ That was a lot of money for a boy who did not have a penny. He was determined to have it anyway. So he cut grass, did jobs of all kinds, and soon had his money.

“The boy ran down to the shop and said, ‘I want my boat.’ He paid the money and received his boat. He took the boat up in his arms, and hugged and kissed it. He said, ‘You dear little boat, I love you. You are mine. You are twice mine. I made you, and now I have bought you.’

“So it is with us. We are, in a way, twice the Lord’s. He created us, and we got into the devil’s pawnshop. Then Jesus came and bought us at great cost—not silver and gold, but His precious blood. We are the Lord’s by creation and by redemption.”<sup>1</sup>—Adapted from William Moses Tidwell, *Pointed Illustrations* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1951), page 97.

1. redemption—the process through which Jesus saves us. He buys us back from sin and sets us free through His death on the cross.

**SUNDAY—OCTOBER 23****THE FOOLISH GALATIANS  
(Galatians 3:1–5)**

**Summarize what Paul is saying to the Galatians in chapter 3:1–5. In what way could we be in danger of falling into the same spiritual trap? (This is the trap of starting out right and then falling into legalism.<sup>2</sup>)**

Several modern translators have tried to understand Paul’s words in verse 1 about the “foolish” Galatians. One word they have struggled with is the word they translate as “foolish.” The word Paul uses in Greek is even stronger than that. The word is *anoetoi*. It comes from the word for “mind” (*nous*). Really, it means “mindless.” Paul is saying that the Galatians were not thinking. But Paul does not stop there. He says that because the Galatians are acting so foolishly, Paul wonders if some magician has put a spell on them. “Who has bewitched<sup>3</sup> you . . . ?” (NKJV). Paul’s words may even suggest that the real cause behind the Galatians’ problem is the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Paul is very puzzled about the Galatians’ backsliding<sup>4</sup> away from the gospel truth. The Galatians know salvation is rooted in the Cross of Christ. It is not something that they could have missed. The word translated “portrayed [pictured]” (NKJV) or “set forth” (KJV) in Galatians 3:1 means “placarded [advertised]” or “painted.”

It was used in Bible times to describe all public announcements. Paul had painted a vivid (living and true) picture of Christ on the cross in their minds (1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 2:2). In a way, Paul is saying that, by their actions, the Galatians are turning away from the Cross.



**The Galatians acted so foolishly that Paul wondered if some magician had put a spell on them!**

Paul then shows the big difference between the Galatians at that time and the time when they first came to faith in Christ. He does this by asking them some questions. How did they receive the Spirit? In other words, how did they first become Christians? And Paul also asks, Why did God give them the Spirit? Was it because they did something to earn it? The answer to this second question is, Certainly not! Instead, it was because they believed the good news of what Christ had already done for them. The Galatians had begun so well. What would make them think that now they had to depend upon their own behavior (actions) for salvation?

2. legalism—the belief that one can earn salvation by obeying the law.

3. bewitched—using magic to make someone do, think, or say something; to put someone under a spell.

4. backsliding—falling back into sin.

**How often do you find yourself thinking, *I am doing pretty well. I am a pretty solid Christian. I do not do this or I do not do that.* And then, do you secretly think that you are somehow good enough on your own to be saved? What is wrong with this picture?**

## MONDAY—OCTOBER 24

### ROOTED IN THE BIBLE (Galatians 3:6–8)

So far, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul has defended his gospel of justification by faith.<sup>5</sup> He has reached an agreement with the apostles<sup>6</sup> in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1–10). He has also pointed to the personal experience of the Galatians themselves (Galatians 3:1–5). In Galatians 3:6, Paul now turns to the testimony of the Bible for the final support of his gospel. In fact, Galatians 3:6–4:31 is made up of more arguments, listed step by step, that are rooted in the Bible.

**What does Paul mean when he writes about the “Bible” in Galatians 3:6–8? Read Romans 1:2; Romans 4:3; and Romans 9:17.**

It is important to remember that at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians there was no “New Testament.” Paul was the earliest New

Testament writer. The Gospel<sup>7</sup> of Mark is probably the earliest of the four Gospels. But it was not written until around the time of Paul’s death (A.D. 65). That is about 15 years after Paul’s letter to the Galatians. So, when Paul speaks of the Bible in his letters, he has only the Old Testament in mind.

The Old Testament Bible plays an important part in Paul’s teachings. Paul does not think of the Old Testament verses as dead. Instead, he believes them to be the living Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul writes, “All Scripture [Bible] is given by inspiration<sup>8</sup> of God.” The word translated “inspiration” is *theopneustos*. The first part of the word (*theo*) means “God.” The second half means “breathed.” This means that the Bible is “God-breathed.” Paul uses the Bible to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah (Chosen One) (Romans 1:2) to give instruction in Christian living (Romans 13:8–10), and to prove that his teachings are true (Galatians 3:8, 9).

It is not easy to decide exactly how many hundreds of times Paul quotes the Old Testament. But quotes from the Old Testament are found throughout all of his letters, except his two shortest ones, Titus and Philemon.

**Read carefully Galatians 3:6–14. Notice how many verses Paul quotes from the Old Testament. What does that tell us about the**

5. justification by faith—the belief that being saved and forgiven depends only on the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

6. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

7. Gospel—one of the first four books in the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus’ life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

8. inspiration—influence or guidance from God.

authority of the Old Testament? Do you sometimes think that one part of the Bible is more “inspired [of God]” than other parts? According to Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 3:16, what is the danger of this kind of thinking?

**TUESDAY—OCTOBER 25**

**JUDGED AS RIGHTEOUS  
(Galatians 3:6)**

**Why do you think Paul first uses Abraham’s example from the Bible to support his gospel message in Galatians 3:6?**

Abraham was an important person to the Jews. He was the father of the Jewish race. And the Jews in Paul’s time also thought Abraham was the example of what a true Jew should be. Many believed that Abraham’s greatest character trait<sup>9</sup> was his obedience. And God had judged Abraham as righteous (holy) because of that obedience. After all, Abraham left his homeland and family. He accepted circumcision.<sup>10</sup> And he was even willing to sacrifice (give up) his son at God’s command. That is obedience! With their requirement of circumcision, Paul’s enemies certainly argued along these same lines.

But Paul turns the tables on them by using Abraham nine times in Galatians as an example of faith instead of law keeping.



Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac at God’s command.

**Consider Paul’s quote of Genesis 15:6. What does it mean when it says that Abraham’s faith was “counted . . . to him for righteousness”? (Read also Romans 4:3–6, verses 8–11, and verses 22–24.)**

Justification was a word used by lawyers. In the same way the word *counted* is used by business people. It can mean “to credit” or “to place something to one’s account.” It is used of Abraham in Galatians 3:6. And it is used another 11 times in connection with Abraham, too, in other verses. Some Bible versions translate it as “counted,” or “judged as righteous.”

According to Paul’s example, what is placed to our accounts is righteousness (goodness). But the question is: on what basis does God count us as righteous? It surely cannot be because of obedience. And no matter what Paul’s enemies tried to say about Abraham’s obedience,

9. character trait—a quality, such as being honest and faithful, that makes a person who he or she is.

10. circumcision—the act of cutting off the skin (called the foreskin) at the end of the penis of a man or boy.

the Bible says that it was because of Abraham's faith that God counted (judged) him as righteous.

The Bible is clear: Abraham's obedience was not the reason for his justification. Instead, it was the result. Abraham did not do the things he did in order to be justified. Abraham did them because he already was justified. Justification leads to obedience, not the other way around.

**Think deeply about what this means: you are justified not by anything you do but only by what Christ has done for you. Why is that such good news? How can you learn to make that truth your own?**

### **WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 26**

#### **THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Genesis 12:1–3)**

“Long ago, Scripture [the Bible] knew that God would make non-Jews right with himself by believing in him. He [God] announced the good news ahead of time to Abraham. He said, ‘All nations will be blessed because of you’ ” (Galatians 3:8, NIV). Paul writes here that the gospel was preached to Abraham, and it was God who preached it. So, Paul argues, it must have been the true gospel. But when did God preach the gospel to Abraham? Paul's quote of Genesis 12:3 shows he recalls the covenant (promise) that God made with Abraham when He called him in Genesis 12:1–3.

**Read Genesis 12:1–3. What do these verses tell us about the covenant that God made with Abraham?**

The basis of God's covenant with Abraham depends on God's promises to him. God says to Abraham four times, “I will.” God's promises to Abraham are surprising because God does all the promising. Abraham promises nothing. This is not the way most people think about God. We usually promise we will serve Him if only He will do something for us in return. But that is legalism, the belief that your own good works can save you or earn you salvation. God does not ask Abraham to promise anything. He only asks Abraham to accept His promises by faith. Of course, this is not so easy at first, because Abraham has to learn to trust completely in God and not in himself (read Genesis 22). The call of Abraham shows the basis of the gospel, which is salvation by faith.

Some make the mistake of thinking that the Bible teaches two ways of salvation. They claim that in Old Testament times salvation was based on keeping the commandments. Then, because that did not work very well, God dropped the law and made salvation possible by faith. This is not the truth. As Paul writes in Galatians 1:7, there is only one gospel.

**What other examples can you find in the Old Testament of salvation by faith alone? Read, for example, Leviticus 17:11; Psalm**

32:1–5; 2 Samuel 12:1–13; and Zechariah 3:1–4.

People often use the wording “cheap grace.” But there is no such thing. Grace is not cheap. It is free (at least for us). But we ruin it when we think that we can add to it by our works. We also ruin it when we think we can use it as an excuse to sin. In your own experience, which one of these two ways are you more guilty of? How can you stop?



Grace is not cheap, even if it's free.

## THURSDAY—OCTOBER 27

### REDEEMED (SAVED) FROM A CURSE (Galatians 3:9–14)

Paul's enemies were no doubt shocked by his bold words in Galatians 3:10. They certainly did not think themselves to be under a curse. Instead, they expected to be blessed for their obedience. But Paul is very clear: “All who depend on obeying the law are under a curse. It is written,

11. glory—great power, beauty, or royal perfection.

‘May everyone who doesn't [does not] continue to do everything that is written in the Book of the Law be under God's curse' ” (Galatians 3:10, NIV).

Paul is showing two completely different choices: salvation by faith and salvation by works. The covenant blessings and curses outlined in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 are clear. Those who obey are blessed. And those who disobey are cursed. That means if a person wants to depend on obedience to the law for acceptance with God, then the whole law needs to be kept. We do not have the freedom to pick and choose what we want to follow. And we should not think that God is willing to overlook a few mistakes here and there. It is all or nothing.

This is, of course, bad news for Gentiles (non-Jews) and for Paul's Jewish enemies. This is because we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory<sup>11</sup> of God” (Romans 3:23). No matter how hard we try to be good, the law can only judge us as lawbreakers.

**According to Galatians 3:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, how did Christ set us free from the curse of the law?**

Paul introduces another symbol (example) to explain what God has done for us in Christ. The word *redeem* means “to buy back.” It was used to refer to the ransom (buyback) price paid to free hostages or the

price paid to free a slave. Because the wages of sin are death, the curse of failing to keep the law was often a death sentence. So, the ransom (price) paid for our salvation was not cheap. It cost God the life of His own Son (John 3:16). Jesus ransomed (freed) us from the curse by taking our place on the cross for our sins (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23). He voluntarily took our curse upon Himself and paid for our sake the full price of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Paul uses Deuteronomy 21:23 as proof from the Bible. According to Jewish custom, a person was under God's curse if the body was hung upon a tree. Jesus' death on the cross was thought to be an example of this curse (Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24).

No wonder, then, that the cross was a stumbling block for some Jews who could not understand the idea that the Messiah was under the curse of God. But this was exactly God's plan. Yes, the Messiah carried a curse. But it was not His own. It was ours!



The wages of sin are death.

### FRIDAY—OCTOBER 28

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Upon Christ our substitute was placed the sin of us all. He was judged as a law-breaker so that He might save us from the curse of the law. The guilt of every future child of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The anger of God against sin, the terrible example of His displeasure because of sin, filled the soul of His Son with great suffering. All His life Christ had been announcing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the worst of sinners was Jesus' theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He carried, Jesus could not see the Father's forgiving face. The withdrawal of the Father's face from the Savior in this hour of great suffering broke His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this suffering that Jesus could not feel any physical pain.

“Satan with his terrible temptations wrenched the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see beyond the doors of death. He did not know if He would come out of the grave a victor over sin. He did not know, as He hung on the cross, if His Father accepted His sacrifice for sin. Jesus feared that sin was so terrible to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the suffering which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer be possible for the guilty race. It was sin, and the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup Jesus drank so bitter.

And this broke the heart of the Son of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 753.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Even today in our own church, some still have a hard time accepting that God’s grace,<sup>12</sup> through Christ, saves us, apart from our works. What

causes some of us to be slow in accepting important truth?

② Paul spoke very strongly against the false idea of salvation by works. What does that tell us about the importance of careful Bible study? Why should we, as a church, stand strong when false teachings are being taught among us?

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12. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.