

**An Invitation and Calling:
Learning to Live in the Grace of Christ
September 16 – November 11 2012**

**“Understanding How Christ Unlocks Grace”
Study Helps: Week Four of Nine
Galatians 3:1-29, Oct 7 2012**

Focus for Week Four

We are studying the invitation and calling that God extends to all people to “live in the grace of Christ.” We have been looking at this invitation through the letter Paul wrote to the Christians in churches in the region of Galatia, communities that had come into this grace of Christ when they received Jesus during the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. This morning, we consider **how Jesus unlocks grace in our lives** by looking at what Paul says in Galatians 3.

Summary of “Time of Reflection” and Message

1. Time of Reflection

- **The first step to living in the grace of Christ is to be rescued by Jesus.** We read that Jesus “died for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age. . .” (Galatians 1:4). We will see similar language of rescue in Galatians 3. Through Jesus, one is rescued into grace. Only by first standing in this grace earned for us by Christ’s death can one then learn to live this grace of Christ.
- Another key aspect of this invitation, which Paul states is obvious but which is not clear to many, is that **we can only open this invitation by the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- Paul introduces this essential reality of the Holy Spirit’s work in Galatians 3:1-6 where we see that
 - a. God gives his Holy Spirit (see also John 15:26-27).
 - b. One enters the grace of Christ by the Holy Spirit (see also John 3:3-8).
 - c. One continues to live in the grace of Christ by the same Spirit.
 - d. The Holy Spirit works powerfully IN and AMONG his people.
 - e. We are to BEGIN and END living in the grace of Christ by the Holy Spirit.
- **Our obvious response to this essential work of Holy Spirit? Holy Spirit, COME!!!**

2. Summary of Message

- **When Jesus rescues a person and reveals himself in a person, remarkable changes begin to happen; grace is unlocked**
 - a. This is what happened when Paul preached Christ to those to whom he is now writing (see Acts 14:1, 3; Acts 14:8-10).

- b. This is happening in the lives of many who are part of the ICB community.
- **One must be aware that one can easily misunderstand Jesus if not disciplined well.**
 - a. This happened in Lystra (Acts 14:8-21), where the people thought Paul and Barnabas were the Greek gods, Zeus and Hermes, visiting them (again).
 - b. We too build a wrong understanding of Jesus that comes from our cultural background or previous worldviews.
- **Paul is specifically concerned that the people have become “bewitched” (3:1)**
 - a. In English, the word means, “cast a supposed spell on someone.” The Greek root of the word is slanderous; therefore, to bewitch in this passage refers to ways people are “slandering Jesus” by attaching wrong understandings of Jesus and the grace he earned through his death on the cross - - ways that the people are wrongly believing are true.
 - b. In order to free people from their bewitchment, Paul identifies ways Jesus unlocks grace in our lives.
- **Four Ways Jesus Unlocks Grace in Our Lives**
 - a. **Jesus sends his Holy Spirit into our lives (3:1-9)**
 - 1) The Holy Spirit leads us to understand purpose of Christ’s death on a cross (Galatians 1:4, 2:20, 3:1).
 - 2) The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus in us (2:20).
 - 3) The Holy Spirit displays his power in and among us in the present (3:4-5).
 - 4) The Holy Spirit grows us to understand God’s one story of redemption from Abraham to Jesus (3:6 – 9).
 - b. **Jesus took on himself the curse of the law AND redeems those under this curse who believe in this work for which he gave his life on the cross (3:10-14)**
 - 1) If a person relies on the law, they must do everything the law requires according to God’s perfect standard of loving God and loving one’s neighbour (3:10).
 - 2) Since no person can fully obey God’s perfect standard, they are under God’s curse.
 - 3) Christ became the curse for us by perfectly obeying God’s law and then taking on himself the curse we deserved.
 - 4) Only by believing in this work of Christ can one be freed from this curse; one cannot enter this grace of Christ through one’s own efforts, no matter what standard or righteousness one practices.
 - c. **Jesus frees us from the control of sin (3:15-25)**
 - 1) The promise of the Holy Spirit is given to Abraham and his seed (3:16).
 - 2) The seed refers to Jesus (3:16).
 - 3) The promise of the Holy Spirit is given by grace, not by the law (3:18).
 - 4) The law is given to “control” sin (3:19, 22).
 - 5) Before Jesus came, people were held in “custody under the law;” they were under the control of sin.

- 6) In light of Christ's coming, the promised Holy Spirit in our lives can free us from the control of sin (3:22) so that those who have faith in Christ no longer need the law to still function for them as a guardian (i.e. slave attendant/babysitter to a freeborn child).¹

d. Jesus adopts us that we might live in Christ, Abraham's seed (3:26-29)

- 1) Jesus adopts those who believe in him.
- 2) Through this adoption
 - a) We are made children of God.
 - b) We are baptized into Christ (see Galatians 2:20).
Note: This work of Christ is celebrated through the sacrament of baptism.
 - c) We are clothed with Christ.
 - d) We belong to a new family where relationships are no longer defined by ethnic, social, or gender distinctions.
 - e) We live as one in Christ.
 - f) We are part of Abraham's seed by being in Christ, the seed.

For Further Study

1. Read Galatians 3:1-28 with Paul's summary of this passage in 3:29 in mind: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
2. Read Acts 14 and note ways Jesus unlocked grace through the work of the Holy Spirit as well as misunderstandings of Jesus that surfaced when Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Iconium and Lystra, in the region of Galatia.
3. Go online and read a summary of the story told by Ovid (Roman poet, 43BC – AD18) about an old married couple, Baucis and Philemon, who he says lived in Phrygia (near Lystra) and were the only two to recognize the Greek gods, Zeus and Hermes, when they visited the region. Consider this story in light of how easy it is to misunderstand Jesus in your life and context.
4. Go to the manuscript of Galatians 3 and note the many Old Testament references that Paul identifies as fulfilled in Christ. Select two or three of the references and consider their original context.
5. Review the four ways mentioned through which Jesus unlocks grace in our lives. What are ways you have experienced Jesus doing this in your life?
6. Take Away Question: Do I understand why I could not unlock God's grace myself but needed Jesus to do so?

* Prepared by Tim Berends

¹ 3:24 – "Was our guardian. . ." – The NIV 2011 Study Bible notes the following: "The expression translates the Greek *paidagogos* (from which 'pedagogue' is derived). It refers to the personal slave-attendant who accompanied a freeborn boy wherever he went and exercises a certain amount of discipline over him. His function was more like that of a babysitter than a teacher."