

Summary

Pastor Mark addresses the question of whether God grades on a curve, exploring the difference between salvation by works versus salvation by faith. Using Galatians 3, he explains that we are made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, not by keeping the law or doing good works. The message emphasizes that genuine faith expresses itself in action, specifically through baptism and putting on new spiritual clothes. He clarifies that while we are saved by faith alone, this faith naturally leads to transformation and obedience as expressions of gratitude, not attempts to earn salvation.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us. Help us to be receptive to Your truth and willing to examine our own lives in light of Your Word. We pray that You would speak to each person here according to their specific needs and circumstances. Give us ears to hear, hearts to understand, and the courage to respond to what You reveal to us today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one piece of clothing you own that you absolutely love to wear and why?

Key Verses

1. Galatians 3:2
2. Galatians 2:16
3. Galatians 3:11-14
4. Galatians 3:26
5. Ephesians 4:22-24

Questions

1. How would you answer if someone asked you 'What's the one thing about your faith?' Why is that your answer?
2. Pastor Mark asked if God grades on a curve. What are some ways people try to earn their way to heaven, and why do you think this mindset is so common?
3. What's the difference between being saved by faith versus being saved by works? Why is this distinction so important?
4. The sermon mentions that genuine faith expresses itself in action. How have you seen this play out in your own life or in others?
5. What does it mean that we receive the Holy Spirit by faith? How should this reality impact our daily lives?

6. If you've been baptized, what did that experience mean to you? If you haven't, what questions or concerns do you have about baptism?
7. What does it look like practically to 'throw off old clothes' and 'put on new clothes' as a believer?
8. Pastor Mark mentioned that our identity comes from who Jesus says we are, not from our past. How can this truth help someone who is struggling with guilt or shame?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you're still wearing 'old clothes' - perhaps an old pattern of thinking, a habit, or an attitude that doesn't reflect your new identity in Christ. Take specific steps to 'throw off' this old way and 'put on' what God desires for you in that area. Spend time daily asking the Holy Spirit to renew your mind and help you live out your new identity.

Key Takeaways

1. We are made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by keeping rules or doing good works
2. Choice, not chance, determines our eternal destiny - the choice to place faith in Christ rather than in ourselves
3. Genuine faith naturally expresses itself in action, including baptism and transformed living
4. We receive and live by the Holy Spirit through faith, not through perfect obedience
5. Our identity comes from who Jesus says we are, not from our past or our performance

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the incredible truth that we are saved by faith alone and not by our works. Help us to live in the freedom and confidence that comes from knowing our salvation is secure in You. For those who need to take the step of baptism, give them courage to be obedient. For all of us, help us to daily throw off the old clothes of our former way of life and put on the new clothes You have given us. Renew our minds by Your Spirit and help us to live out our true identity as Your children. May our lives be a testimony of Your grace and goodness. In Your precious name, Amen.