

Galatians 3 – Chapter Study

OUTLINE

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II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE Ch. 1:6-7

Stay loyal to the gospel of grace

III. MESSAGE Chs.1:8-6:10

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B. Paul's Apostleship 1:10-2:14

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1. Justification by faith, not works 2:15-21

Let's recap. There were several churches in the **region** known as Galatia.

Paul had been instrumental in planting some of them.

The Galatians weren't exactly the sharpest knife in the drawer.

But what they lacked in brains they more than made up for in industry.

This was a rough-tough place to live but they managed to thrive there due to their *git'erdone* mindset.

As often happened in the churches he planted, after Paul left, some **false teachers** known as the Judaizers arrived.

They said while Paul's message was a good start, it wasn't complete.

If Gentiles wanted to be right with God, they needed **to keep the Law** of Moses; in effect, they needed to become Jews. That's why they were called Judaizers.

In order to promote their legalistic agenda, the Judaizers **had to downgrade** Paul & his message.

So they'd attacked his credibility & claimed that they had been sent out from the church leadership in Jerusalem.

When Paul received a report that the Judaizers had arrived in Galatia & were up to their old tricks, & that many of the believers were falling for their error, he fired off this very personal letter.

As we've seen in the first 2 chs, **he begins by defending** his calling as an apostle & relates how the leadership in Jerusalem had already endorsed his message & in fact, denied the legalistic message of the Judaizers.

Now in ch. 3, Paul asks 6 pointed questions of the Galatians; reminding them of just how powerfully the Spirit of God had worked among them when they responded, not to a legalistic call to rules, rituals, & regulations, but to the Gospel of Grace.

2. Paul's questions 3:1-9

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Sometimes we're so close to something we have a difficult time seeing things as they really are.

Being at a distance & getting a report of what was happening in the churches of Galatia – it was obvious to Paul what was wrong.

Last he'd heard, things were going great.

His memory of the Galatians was the vibrancy of their faith & the evidence of God's power among them. Then all of a sudden, out of the blue, he hears that false teachers have shifted a large portion of them to a totally contrary message.

Why – it was as if they'd been put under a spell, like they were *bewitched*.

For the Galatians, it happened slowly. But for Paul, the change was dramatic.

You've probably heard how to boil a frog.

If you put a frog in a pot of hot water, he'll jump out.

But if you put him in room temp water then slowly bring up the heat, he'll sit there content till he's dead.

Paul says to the Galatians, "You're sitting in a boiling pot! Get out!!"

He calls them **foolish** – which was the way everyone else saw them.

Again – they had a well-deserved reputation for being dense.

Paul tells them they're living up to their rep by being fooled by false teachers.

Then he does something we see Jesus doing again & again in His message to the 7 churches of Rev. 2-3; **he reminds them of their conversion** & early days as believers.

When Paul first preached to them the Gospel of Grace, they'd understood the message of the cross. Things had been so clear then.

They'd realized that the Cross means there's no other way to be saved.

If there was another way, then the cross was unnecessary & God never would have sent His Son.

So, that being true – how could the Galatians now be trying to add their own works to God's grace?

When you're safe on dry land, you don't need to wear a life vest & sit in a raft.

You leave that stuff behind so you can enjoy the fullness of what the land has to offer.

Saved by grace, we're free from bondage to the law

We're free because grace puts righteousness within us & gives us the power to live it out.

The law is an external righteousness that can never get in.

All it does is produce failure & guilt.

2 This only I want to learn from you:

Tell me this one thing -

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—

This was a piercing question that would move the Galatians to real soul searching.

If they were honest it would produce a deep regret at how they'd been tricked by the false teachers.

You see, when the Gospel of Grace was preached among them, the Spirit of God worked so powerfully in conviction & in verifying the message by signs & wonders, they'd been blown away.

Paul's question is so simple, even the dense Galatians would get it: Did God validate his or the Judaizers' message?

God had set His seal of approval on the Gospel of Grace, NOT legalism. // So . . .

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

This question is rhetorical; it's not meant to be debated. "No" was the only answer.

Yet, this is precisely what happens in many Christian's lives; they **begin** in & by the grace & Spirit of God, then shift to their own efforts to be & do good.

The reason this is so common among believers is because there's something broken inside us that wants to claim credit for our salvation, even if it's just a little bit.

Cake Mix

Some years ago a leading food manufacturer developed a new cake mix that required only water to be added.

Tests were run, surveys were made, & the cake mix was found to be of superior quality to other mixes. It tasted good, was easy to use, and made a moist, tender cake.

The company stage an expensive marketing campaign then released the cake mix to the general market. Few people bought it. So the company did surveys to find out why it sold so poorly.

Based on the results of that survey, the company recalled the mix, reworked the formula, & released the revised mix. This time it sold like mad.

Here's what they did differently. They simply required that water & AN EGG be added to the mix. You see, the first mix was just *too simple*. People couldn't believe that something worth while could be so simple. They reasoned it had to take more work to get a decent result.

Listen → **Grace is no** excuse for a morally sloppy or spiritually lazy lifestyle.

On the contrary, real grace empowers us to walk in holiness & please God.

The evidence of grace is growth in spiritual maturity.

It's all about initiative. That's the crucial issue.

If we're living by God's grace, His Spirit is our initiative.

We live in a manner that pleases God because everything we do is a response to His love.

It's the overflow an on-going, moment by moment **partnership** with Him.

If we're not living by God's grace, then it's self-effort & everything is aimed either at satisfying self, or at gaining God's love & approval.

Let me use a simple illustration on this principle of initiative.

Why read the Bible & pray? Why have a daily devotional time?

Here's what many Christians think –

“Because it's something I ought to do; it's a practice good Christians perform.”

“If I do daily devotions, then I please God.”

“If I read my Bible & pray, God will love me more.”

“It makes me a better person.”

No! That's the essence of legalism! That what we DO will make us better & will garner more of God's good will toward us.

God's Spirit alone makes us better people, not what we do!

God's grace has once & for all settled the issue of His good will & love.

God can't love you more because He already loves you perfectly.

Can God be more pleased with you? Certainly!

But only when we forsake & renounce all self-effort & depend totally on Him!

Daily devotions are a good thing – not because they earn us brownie points with God or make us better people but because they're a means of fellowship with God.

And fellowship with Him is how He works in us to accomplish His will.

Bible Teacher & Commentator William Newell wrote the following in his commentary on Romans.

The Man/Woman under Grace . . .

Has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing

Is not 'on probation.'

As to the life past—it does not exist before God: he died at the Cross & Christ is his life.

Once bestowed, grace is not withdrawn because God knew all about us *beforehand*. His action was independent of our future behavior, not dependent on it.

The failure of devotion does not cause the withdrawal of bestowed grace, as it would under law.

The Proper Attitude of Man/Woman under Grace

To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.

To refuse to make *resolutions* and *vows*; for *that* is to trust in the flesh.

To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.

To testify of God's goodness at all times.

To be certain of God's future favor; yet to be ever more tender in conscience toward Him.

To rely on God's chastening hand as a mark of His kindness.

Things Which Gracious Souls Discover

To '*hope to be better*' is to fail to see yourself in Christ *only*.

To be disappointed with yourself, is to have believed in yourself. To be discouraged is unbelief, as to God's purpose and plan of blessing for you. To be proud, is to be blind. For we have no standing before God in ourselves.

The lack of Divine blessing therefore, comes from unbelief and not from failure of devotion.

Real devotion to God arises not from man's will to show it; but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted.

To preach devotion first and blessing second is to reverse God's order and preach law, not grace. The Law made man's blessing depend on devotion. Grace confers undeserved, unconditional blessing.

⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

As is typical when the Gospel first arrives, it had created a furor in the cities & towns of Galatia and had caused some persecution & opposition.

But they'd understood that as another evidence of the truthfulness of the message.

It's expected that the world will oppose the Kingdom of God.
But now that they were turning to the legalism of the Judaizers, their earlier trials were a waste.

5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Again – this was a no-brainer. God had shown by many mighty miracles His validation of the Gospel of Grace, not rules.

6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Paul now turns a corner from their personal experience to the theology of Grace.

He quotes from **Genesis 15:6** where Moses said that Abraham, the prototype for faith, says that righteousness is not something we produce by our own actions – it's a gift God bestows on those who put their trust in Him!

7 Therefore know

TVM – Right now & always get it – understand – count on – reckon it to be what really is

that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

Now – in order to get at the meat of this we need to know that **the Judaizers were** all about Abraham! Abe & **Moses were** their heroes!

The Judaizers said Abraham was the prototype for a man of God & Moses explained how we can be like Abraham. That's what the Law was – a codified description of what Abraham did & why God chose him to be the Father of the Chosen People.

They claimed to be Abe's children because they also kept the Law & obtained righteousness by it.

Paul dismantles their ideas by pointing out that **Moses said Abraham's righteousness** was attributed to Him by the grace of God & appropriated by faith, apart from works.

Abraham is indeed the template for how we come to God – but it's not by works or the law; it's by faith.

And all those who believe in God as Abe did are his spiritual offspring.

Paul says virtually the same thing in Romans.

True Jews are not the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac & Jacob.

They are those who've come to an abiding faith in the God of Abraham.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith,

Not by the Law -

preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

It's all the way back in Genesis 12 when God first spoke to Abraham that all of this was revealed.

Paul goes back to the beginning to show that the principle of salvation by grace thru faith was in place because the false teachers accused him of preaching something new & without support in God's Word.

No – the Gospel goes all the way back to before the beginning!

For even in the Garden after the Fall, God told Adam & Eve one day the woman's seed would crush the serpent's head.

And in Revelation, John has a vision of Christ as a lamb slain before the creation of the world.

Grace was no late innovation on Paul's part.

Grace wasn't God's Plan B because the Law of Moses proved too tough.

The Law served an important purpose as we'll soon see.

But it was never, ever intended by God to be the means by which we're made right with Him.

ONLY Christ can do that.

In fact, Paul turns now to deal with the Law & show what effect it has . . .

3. The law's curse 3:10-14

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written,

Then he quotes Deut 27:26 -

“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

One of the problems with trying to earn your way to God by the Law is that you can't pick & choose which rules you want to keep; you have to keep it all.

If you fail, you haven't just broken A law, you've broken THE Law.

And when you break THE Law, you fall under the curse of God. [Tablets]

¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

This is one of those passages where Paul packs an entire semester of theology into just a few words.

Let's unpack it a bit.

¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident

This was obvious to both Jews & Gentiles because they brought sacrifices to atone for sin, for breaking the moral code God required of them.

So no one would claim that they were just/righteous before God on the basis of the Law.

Paul then quotes 2 passages from the OT that set 2 possible paths down – 1 is by faith, the other is by law.

The prophet Habakkuk says that the one who is truly just lives by faith –

In Leviticus, Moses says the one who lives by the law must keep it all.

So in other words, Paul admits there are 2 ways to live, 2 ways to God: Grace & Works

The problem is, as he says at the beginning of v. 11; The Way of Works is a dead end.

No one gets to heaven via that route.

On the contrary – that route leads to a curse, not blessing.

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,

How?

having become a curse for us (for it is written,

Deut 21:23

"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Failing to keep the law, we all lie under the curse of the broken law.

So Jesus came & took upon Himself the penalty of the curse; OUR curse; OUR penalty.

4. God's unchanging promise 3:15-18

¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men:

This is Paul's way of saying, "Let me use an illustration."

Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

We would say, once you sign your name, the contract is binding.

Paul applies this to God's promise.

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

In Gen. 22:18, God promised Abraham in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Paul highlights that seed is singular not plural.

The point is clear: The seed is a specific descendant of Abraham, Christ.

The unchanging promise God made was to both Abe & Jesus – & it predates the covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai by over 400 years.

God's covenant with Abraham & Christ was Unilateral & Unconditional – Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15, Gen. 17:7-8

God's covenant with Israel was Bilateral & Conditional – Deut. 28, Exo. 24:3-8.

There were all kinds of "ifs" associated with God's promises to Israel on the basis of the Law.

But in His promise to Abraham which predates the Law, there are no "ifs" because performance of the covenant depends on God alone, not Abraham.

Paul's point is that the promise of blessing is obtained by faith, not the law.

5. The law's purpose 3:19-25

Paul's done a brilliant job of using the Scriptures to show the superiority of grace by faith in contrast to the works of the law.

From long experience with the Judaizers he knows they will raise the objection that if the way to God was always by grace through faith, as the life of Abraham makes clear, why did God give Moses the Law 430 years later?

What's the point of the law if it can't make us right with God?

19 What purpose then does the law serve?

The best way to deal with an opponent is to raise his own points before he can.

Paul tells us now why the law came; what God intend it for.

It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

It was by the agency of angelic messengers that the Law was given to Moses.

The 10 Commandments which form the heart of the Law were uttered by the voice of God in the hearing of all the people, and written by the finger of God on the stone tablets.

But Moses was given many more ordinances over several days that regulated the life of the people of Israel.

Those things were communicated by angels to Moses, who dutifully wrote them down and taught them to the people.

Paul's point is that the law was given after the entrance of sin.

And it came **BECAUSE** of sin.

You see, the Law has 2 main elements:

1) It defines what sin is – **2) Provides a** means to cover it.

It's descriptive & prescriptive.

Turns out, knowing what's right & wrong isn't as obvious as it might seem.

We need a code to tell us proper behavior.

For instance, in Baldwin Park nobody is allowed to ride a bicycle in a swimming pool.

In Blythe, you're not permitted to wear cowboy boots unless you own at least 2 cows.

In Burlingame it's illegal to spit, except on baseball diamonds.

In Chico you must obtain a permit from the city to throw hay in a cesspool.

It's illegal to own a green or smelly animal hide.

Bowling on the sidewalk is illegal.

And driving a herd of cattle down a street is against the law.

In the Law of Moses, there were all kinds of seemingly arcane rules to regulate the lives of God's people.

Turns out there was an amazing reason for every one of them.

But at first reading, they seem rather bizarre.

20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Paul's point is that with the law, there's a lack of intimacy & immediacy with God.

The Law was given to angles, who gave it to Moses, who gave it to the people.

The promise to Abraham was direct from God.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!

Since both the promise & the Law are from God, of course they don't contradict each other.

The law just needs to be understood in its proper role.

For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The Law doesn't produce righteousness.

On the contrary, it shuts all people up into a spiritual prison of guilt.

Freedom comes only through faith in Christ.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Then using the clearest illustration, he says it this way -

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

What the Law did was make our guilt clear.

Once guilty, then we look for relief, which the Law can't provide – only Christ can deliver us.

The Law is like a speed limit sign.

It identifies how fast you're allowed to go. Exceed that & you're guilty.

Get pulled over, you have a fine to pay.

Now – nothing will ever change the fact of your having broken the law.

You can't undo it. You can pay the fine, but the fact is, it's going on your record.

What if when you went to pay your ticket, someone stood outside the window there at the County Government Center telling you someone already paid it and just by telling the clerk that person's name, your fine would be paid & your record expunged?

That's what Jesus did.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

This is where Paul brings it home to the Galatians.

They'd already known the conviction of sin because when Paul first preached the Gospel, he used the law in its right way – to point out sin.

But once convicted and realizing their need of a Savior, they'd looked by faith to Christ.

Since the Law did its appointed job of bringing them to Christ, there was now no need for the Law.

If you have a math tutor teach you algebra, then get a job as an engineer who works complex formulas using calculus, you wouldn't go running back to your tutor.

Why would the believer resting in God's grace ever pick up the useless rules & regulations of legalism?

6. Sonship 3:26-4:7

a. for all by faith 3:26-29

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Not by the works of the Law.

The Judaizers said it was the covenant of Law that made someone a child of God.

So really, it was only Jews who were in.

If Gentiles wanted to be saved, they had to become Jews.

Paul says, "Nope. Sonship is by faith in Christ."

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Which again – predates the Law by over 400 years.

Feed My Sheep

Feed My Sheep