

## Galatians 3

Good evening and thank you for joining us. We're in Galatians chapter 3 tonight if you would please turn in your bibles there. In the last couple of weeks, we've seen Paul focus on his personal experience with grace. Now in the next couple of chapters, the focus shifts to instruction and application regarding grace.

You'll recall that false teachers that had come in and spoken against Paul's authority as an apostle. And they were spreading the fake news of needing to first come to Judaism in order to become a Christian. This is why at the end of chapter 2 Paul said **Galatians 2:21 "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."**

The problem with asking people to keep a set of rules and requirements in order to improve their standing with God is that it would mean that Jesus really didn't have to die.

The fact that Jesus did die declares that no one can be righteous by our own effort or by our own works. Now to be clear, God has established a basis for righteousness, but it's not upon our works; it's not upon obedience to the law, but it is upon our faith in Jesus Christ.

Much of this will sound repetitive, but it's so necessary because we can conceptualize and intellectualize grace, but the application can be difficult.

The title of tonight's message is BY FAITH  
LET'S PRAY

1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth,[fn] before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you[fn] as crucified? This wasn't a situation where the Galatians had been improperly taught. The sufficiency of the cross was "clearly portrayed." They originally knew that faith in Jesus was all they needed to be right with God - so where did this confusion come from? That's why in verse 1 Paul asks, "who has bewitched you?"

Bewitched has the idea that the Galatians were under some type of spell. Paul didn't mean this literally, but their thinking was so clouded — and so unbiblical — that it seemed that some kind of spell had been cast over them.

Legalism can be seductive. It strikes a chord in our fallen thinking and appeals to our flesh. Everything around us says its our performance that matters. We hear it from our teachers, our coaches, our bosses, even our family. "Just do it" is the Nike slogan - this is certainly the way of the world...so it's no surprise when this thinking can bleed into our walk with the Lord.

The whole notion that we can do something to earn God's favor plays to our pride. It can "bewitch" us-we can easily get caught up into this line of thinking!!

But the true message of the cross liberates. It isn't "Just do it," but "The work is done, and you can't add to it." The real Gospel humbles us because you can't buy or barter for a gift that's free

**2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** Paul asks them the question-how did they receive the HS-was it by keeping the law, or was it by the hearing of faith? The answer is obvious: we receive the Holy Spirit by faith; it's God's gift. We're never worthy of it and can't ever be good enough to deserve.

And this is a false doctrine that is spread still to this day in churches across not only the world, but America. The false doctrine that you have to undergo some sort of cleansing process where you'll become worthy to receive God's HS. Our bodies are never worthy to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Rather we receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith.

**3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?** We all face the temptation to turn towards works as the basis of our relationship with God. And that's always a dangerous basis for a relationship with our Father.

Paul mentions that the Galatians had begun in the Spirit-they had gone forward by faith. But now because of this false doctrine they were trying to improve upon God's work in their life.

And if we really stop to think about it, we've all been guilty of this at one point or another. How many times have we tried to improve on our righteousness by works, by obedience, by promising to God.

Promising, "Now, God, I promise this next week I am going to faithfully pray one hour everyday. I promise You, Lord, I'm going

to. Now, Lord, on the basis of that promise, I want You to bless me. You know, because after all, I'm going to be so righteous by the end of the week having prayed an hour every day."

And having begun in the Spirit, we so often are seeking to be made perfect in the flesh, by our fleshly efforts. Paul is rebuking the Galatians for this false concept.

Now I believe this verse can be taken even in a broader sense. Let me give you an example.

Revivals in history have started off by the moving of the HS. Welsh revival, the first great awakening-Charles Finney, all these revivals. The HS doing a marvelous, great work. But then you know what happens? Man gets involved and says let's organize this a little bit.

This verse is the one that Chuck Smith drilled into every CC Pastor's head at pastors conferences. After Chuck died a prominent CC pastor was quoted as saying "look how much success we had when we were unorganized-imagine what'll happen when we streamline things and get more efficient!" that church used to have 10-15k every week, now it's down to hundreds.

Please understand I'm not condoning sloppiness. God is a God of order, not of chaos and confusion. But every time we see a move of the HS our natural inclination is to try to either duplicate it or improve on it. And if it's not the Lord leading it, we're doing it in our flesh.

Again Chuck always used to say 'if you strive to gain, u have to strive to maintain'. It then becomes a business model. Suddenly the pastor who loves the Lord, desires to see people saved, has morphed into a motivational speaker and business manager to try and maintain attendance or donations or his vision.

How much better to let the HS do His thing?

**4 Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?** When the Galatians received God's grace they came under attack from legalistic Jews. They paid a price to embrace grace. Now, if they capitulate to the pressure and revert back, their initial sacrifices will be wasted.

**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?**— When Paul healed the lame man in Lystra, he didn't chalk it up to his outstanding prayer life or his impeccable purity. Not at all. He credited the miracle to grace. Miracles and healing from God aren't doled out on the basis of merit. When God works a miracle it's due to His grace

This presents some problems for those who have so-called miracle ministries. And they advertise "Miracles every Monday night," As though God were limited. Imagine- you come Sunday morning for a miracle-no sorry, isn't miracle night yet, come back tomorrow night for the miracles."

Now there's a bigger issue here with miracles too. **SHOW PIC**  
Years ago there was a man named A.A. Allen. He opened Miracle Valley Ranch in Arizona. A.A. Allen was an alcoholic. He died of acute alcoholism in San Francisco. And yet, he'd get up before the people, and there were miracles that people would testify to as the result of his prayers and the result of his services. **CLOSE PIC**

Or how about one of the greatest evangelists of our day, Bob Coy? **SHOW PIC** CC FL story...

Now that seems totally inconsistent to us. A person to have that kind of power with God, surely you would think he lived a very dedicated, consecrated, holy, righteous life. That this was God's attestation to the person's holiness or righteousness. Not so.

When God does a miracle it's not on the basis of a person's holiness. It can even stumble people, because somehow, we think that this is related to holiness and to righteousness and to the obedience of a fine line of commitment to God.

Whatever God gives to us, He gives to us on the basis of His grace.

And this is great news because this also means we don't get what we deserve! Could you imagine if we got what we deserved by God?

So we walk in the grace of God. Now, does that mean then we can just go out, and you know, live any kind of sinful life our flesh

desires? No because the love of Christ constrains me to walk a life that is pleasing, and when I use that as the criteria for my life, I find that I live a more strict life than when I try and use right and wrong as the basis for my particular activity.

One last point on this. Remember the nation of Israel came about through Jacob. Jacob was a scoundrel, and yet God blessed him abundantly. When you read genesis you see that Jacob was a deceiver, a conniver. and a manipulator. And when he looked at God's blessings, **Genesis 32:10 "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.**

**6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."**[fn] This quote from Genesis 15:6 is one of the clearest expressions in the Bible of the truth of salvation by grace, through faith alone. It's the gospel in the Old Testament, quoted four times in the New Testament.

Paul points out that centuries before God delivered the Law to Moses and seventeen years before Abraham was circumcised - God declared Abraham "right in His sight" - and why? Because he "believed" God's promise of salvation! This means what God did in saving and favoring the Galatians wasn't new. It has always been by faith.

One other thing. Notice in verse 6 it wasn't that Abraham believed in God (as we usually speak of believing in God). Instead, it was that Abraham believed God. Those who only

believe in God, in the sense that they believe He exists, are only as spiritual as demons are **James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!**

**7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.** Since Abraham was made righteous by faith and not by works, Abraham is therefore the father of everyone who believes God and is accounted righteous.

**8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, 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.** God saves everyone, as He did Abraham... by faith

**10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”**<sup>[fn]</sup> In order to be declared righteous by the law you have to obey the whole law. **James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**

And everyone fails and falters at some point

**11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”**<sup>[fn]</sup> " Here Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. This verse is actually quoted three times in the NT, and each time the emphasis is on a different word. In Romans 1:17 the focus is on "just" - we're made just or right with God, by faith...



In Hebrews 10:38 the stress is on "faith" - we've got to continue in our faith...

But here in Galatians 3:11 the thrust is on "live." We're not just saved by faith, but we live by faith.

**12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”**[fn] In other words, it's either law or faith - toil or trust. You either trust in your work for Jesus, or you trust in Jesus' work for you.

Verse 13 sums up Jesus' work

**13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”**[fn]), According to the Law the worst disgrace was to die on a tree. And on a dead tree - a wooden cross - Jesus died to atone for that disgrace - and bring God's grace to us

**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.** The blessings of Abraham - membership in God's family - is given to us not by our obedience to the Law, but by Jesus' obedience on the cross, and our faith in Him. As we studied a few verses ago even the blessing of the Spirit is received by faith.

Now the rest of Chapter 3 is a commentary on God's covenant with Abraham.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "cut a deal," but I bet you don't know where it came from?

In ancient times when covenants were sealed, animals were sacrificed, and cut in cross-sections from head to toe. The pieces were aligned in a corridor. Both parties in the contract walked together through the animal halves - committing to their side of the deal.

In Genesis 15, after God had promised to bless Abraham, Abraham prepared to finalize the covenant. He made his sacrifices and cut the animals in half. He waited all day for God to come, walk through the animal parts, and ratify the deal. He'd fallen asleep, when God appeared as a burning torch and a smoking oven - as in the wilderness, the fire by day and the cloud by night.

God walked through the carcasses by Himself. This wasn't a tag-team effort, or a joint-venture. God walked down the corridor all by Himself-the work was God's alone. All Abraham did was believe.

And 4000 years later this is still the way God reconciles people. Jesus has accomplished all the work for us. Our part is to look on and believe. It's simple faith! Paul begins to draw lessons from this Abrahamic Covenant in verse 15,

**15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.** If human beings take their promises seriously, how much more will God be faithful to His covenant

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,"<sup>[fn]</sup> who is Christ. In Genesis 22:18 God said to Abraham "In your seed all the nations of the world shall be blessed."

God's covenant with Abraham's family wasn't to seeds (plural), but to a Seed (singular). The ultimate heir of the covenant wasn't the nation that would come from Abraham's loins, but a single descendent, Jesus.

The Jews thought they were God's salvation to the world. It wasn't the Jews. It was A Jew.

The world's philosophy is pluralism, but God is into singular-ism. Our hope of salvation is singular. It's found in one person. The only way to God is Jesus!

17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ,<sup>[fn]</sup> that it should make the promise of no effect. The faith-grace covenant God made with Abraham was firmly entrenched long before the Law came. The Mosaic Law was never intended to take the place of grace.

18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. The Law exposed our sin but it could never take away our sin.

Recently, I ran across some laws that are still on the legal dockets in Ohio

- In Columbus you cant sell corn flakes on sunday
- in Toledo you're now allowed to throw a snake at someone
- in Ohio you cannot kill a housefly within 160 ft of a church w/o a license
- in Lima OH, any map that does not clearly say lima, that map cannot be sold
- you cannot ride on the roof of a taxi in youngstown

It's possible to have laws on the books that are interesting, but are practically obsolete. And this is what Paul says about the Mosaic Law. After the work of Jesus the Law became unnecessary.

19 What purpose then does the law serve? 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. Apparently, the OT Law was conveyed second-hand. It came from God to Moses by angelic intermediaries. Now this wasn't a new concept-remember right before stephen was stoned to death he said this in **Acts 7:53 "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."**

20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. We don't need a priest or a nun or anyone else to mediate between us and God. We have direct access to God through Jesus Christ!

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. The law is perfect,

there's nothing wrong with the law. The problem with the law is that it doesn't give the ability to keep the law.

See if the law could have given life, then it could have brought righteousness. But the Law of Moses brings no life; it simply states the command, tells us to keep it, and tells us the consequences if we break the command.

Remember, if the Law could save, it would've spared Jesus the cross.

**22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** Only faith can break us out of our confinement to sin. The Law of Moses can show us God's standard and our failure, but it cannot give us the freedom that only Jesus can give. The freedom is given to those who believe.

23-25

**23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** The whole purpose of the law is to bring us to Jesus. Which means if someone doesn't present the Law in a way that brings people to faith in Jesus, they aren't presenting the Law properly.

Jesus always presented the Law in a way to show people that they couldn't fulfill it, and needed to look outside of their own righteousness.

**26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** God has only children-no grandkids

**27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** Here, using the picture of baptism, Paul illustrates what it means to have faith in Jesus. He doesn't say we were baptized into water, but baptized into Christ. Just as in water baptism a person is immersed in water, so when we place our faith in Jesus, we are immersed in Jesus.

Sadly, lots of Christians are content with just "dipping a bit" into Jesus. God wants us to be fully immersed in Jesus; not sprinkled, not just a part of us dipped.

Think about it-when a person is immersed in water, you don't even see the person much anymore — you mostly see the water. When we live as baptized into Christ, people won't see much of "us" anymore; they'll see mostly Jesus.

Now the end of verse 27 says Put on Christ-it's like putting on a suit of clothes. So we "clothe ourselves" with Jesus as our identity.

When you think about it, how we dress has a real impact on how we think and act, and how we appear to others. People should see that we belong to Christ by looking at our lives.

**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.** Since salvation is no longer based on our own achievements, the categories that used to define us are abolished - we're all one in Christ. All that distinguishes us now is whether we're in Christ or apart from Christ  
LA story?

**29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Membership in Abraham's family no longer requires a Jewish pedigree. We can leap-frog that requirement by embracing Abraham's heir, Jesus. It's not what you do, but who you know. I'm accepted by faith in Jesus