



“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”

AN OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS¹

Theme: You must be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Introduction: The universal assumption of men is that there is an ability within every person to rise through their own righteous performance, enabling them to compensate for their sinfulness. Sin so corrupts our perception that we are literally blind to our sin and deceive ourselves into a state of dignity, self-worth, and satisfaction with our moral attainments. Additionally, the common assumption of sinners is that we have the ability – on our own – to choose to seek for or place our faith in God if we want to whenever we want.

The arbitrariness of what the measure or standard of righteousness is differentiates between all the major religions of the world. Instead of needing a Savior – or perhaps exclusively needing to be saved – men assume that they are capable of getting themselves to God. Religion essentially packages this assumption into an assortment of flavors – identifying regulations, rules, or roads to which someone must adhere to “make it” to ultimate happiness or eternal blessing.

Immediately upon its birth, the church was assailed by “religionists” – false teachers who sprang out of Judaism to herd “wandering Jews” back into the fold and to impose upon Gentiles the requirement to comply with the Mosaic Laws in addition to faith in Christ. This first epistle written by the Apostle Paul addresses this assumption and aggressively rebukes the people who had professed faith in Christ but were now believing that they needed to contribute to His work through their own righteous acts – something that completely changes the Gospel into a human accomplishment. Throughout Galatians, Paul insists that **“You must be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.”**

I. **THE HAZARD FOR SOULS – 1:1-2:21**

A. **The Assumption of Men – 1:1-10**

1. Such an alteration – although assumedly minor – is a desertion from Christ alone and results in the distortion of the truth – cp. **vv. 6-7**.
 - a) *In Galatians, the specific problem is the need for people – Jew or Gentile to live like Jews, according to the legalistic standards of Judaism signified by the conversion ritual of circumcision.*

¹ This sermon was preached on the occasion of transitioning the exposition from Sunday Nights to Sunday Mornings upon the completion of the Gospel of Luke and providing Pastor George Liepart the opportunity to preach the PM services throughout the summer of 2022.



b) *However, it can evidence itself in the requirement of church attendance, performance of sacraments, fulfillment of the 10 Commandments, or a host of other “good works” done to earn God’s favor.*

c) *Some declare that Jesus will save you, but you must perform good works in order to preserve it or you will “lose it.”*

2. Those who advocate such a distortion are contemptible and accursed – [vv. 8-9](#).

B. The Authority of the Messenger – [1:11-1:24](#)

1. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes about his own credentials as a defense against the heretics that were preaching a works-based salvation.

2. Having been saved out of Judaism that had degenerated into a legalistic self-righteousness, Paul claims that if anyone could save himself based on adherence to strict standards of righteousness, it would be he.

3. However, in the height of his sanctimony and self-righteousness, God called him through grace – cp. [vv. 15-16](#).

4. The Gospel was something that by-passed human contribution and came directly from God – discounting human achievement and maximizing the prodigious and exclusive achievement of the Son of God.

C. The Affirmation of the Message – [2:1-21](#)

1. When the message of the Gospel was evaluated by the other Apostles, the message of salvation through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone was affirmed and unaltered – cp. [v. 6](#).

2. The insidious efforts of the enemy to compromise the message of the Gospel leaves no target unmolested – even the Apostle Peter got caught up in the fear of man and compromise of the truth.

3. Paul had to confront him face-to-face because Peter had become fearful of the legalists and potential accusations of lawlessness from them to the Jews in Jerusalem. The issue is that *“a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”* (cp. [v. 16](#))

4. The Gospel message coming directly from God is that it is the work of Christ, not our own efforts that saves us – we must die to self and claim life exclusively through Christ – cp. [v. 20](#).

II. THE HUMILITY IN SALVATION – [3:1-5:1](#)

A. The Reliance on the Provision in Christ – [3:1-14](#)

1. This humility is unattainable independently of God’s irresistible grace which He provides to those who are totally depraved but chosen to be saved.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

2. Paul asks who should be credited with our salvation, the Lord who was crucified for us or each of us because of our performance of the works of the Law?
3. The Gospel teaches that we are reliant upon Christ alone – since our works are disqualified if we stumble in even one command – [cp. 10](#).
4. However, the person who forfeits self-reliance and self-righteousness to place their faith in Christ and His accomplishment will be saved – [cp. v. 11](#).
5. This is the heart of the book – the truth that sets Christianity apart for all false religions and the spark of the crucial Protestant Reformation.
6. Jesus took upon Himself and paid for the curse under which our sin had placed us so that we might gain His righteousness – [cp. 2 Corinthians 5:21](#).

B. The Revelation of Our Powerlessness through the Law – 3:15-29

1. If you believe that it is by means of your own “law-keeping” or good works that gains righteousness in the sight of God, the percentage of fulfillment of the law is 100%.
2. The intent of the Law is not to provide us salvation, but to inform us of our need for salvation.
3. Misunderstanding the purpose of the Law is what disables us from understanding that Christ alone is the answer to our sin – [cp. vv. 21-22](#).
4. The Law is intended to convince us that we are lost and need Jesus Christ and the righteousness that comes through faith in Him – [cp. v. 24](#).

C. The Realization of Our Privilege in Christ – 4:1-5:1

1. Instead of being enslaved in a legalistic system of Law-keeping, those who place their faith in Christ and His righteousness are liberated by grace and adopted by God – [vv. 4-5](#).
2. These truths strike at the heart of man’s depraved pride and become offensive to someone enslaved to the idea they can save themselves.
3. False teachers prey on innate and sinful sense of personal dignity to induce a following but the truth promotes the interests of One – the Lord Jesus Christ – [v. 19](#).
4. The Apostle illustrates the difference between human efforts and the divine accomplishment by means of an analogy of Hagar (representing the Law and human effort & the flesh) and Sarah (representing grace & the work of the Spirit).

III. THE HELP IN SANCTIFICATION – 5:2-6:18

A. The Failure in our Flesh – 5:2-21

1. This final section of Galatians teaches that not only are we justified by



faith, but we are also sanctified by faith as well – through reliance on the Holy Spirit.

2. When we rely on our flesh, we can do nothing but fall short of God's perfection leaving us completely incompatible with God.
3. We cannot mingle our reliance on our flesh with grace – cp. [v. 4](#).
4. Only a slight amount of sin corrupts the entirety of our lives – cp. [v. 9](#).
5. The standard set by the Law is too high to achieve – cp. [v. 14](#).
6. Our flesh produces nothing but corruption – [vv. 19-21](#).

B. The Fruitfulness of the Spirit – [5:22-6:18](#)

1. However, if we rely on God's grace through faith, we can know the power of God to overcome our flesh – cp. [v. 5:16](#).
2. The fruit of the Spirit's work is the hallmark of those who place their faith in Christ alone and live by grace through faith – [vv. 5:22-24](#).
3. Through the Holy Spirit's ministry to us, we can *“fulfill the law of Christ”* – cp. [v. 6:2](#) ... to love one another – cp. [John 13:34](#).
4. God informs us that through faith in Christ, our only boast of righteousness is the work of Christ done for us on the cross – cp. [v. 6:14](#).
5. Keeping the Law cannot help us – it is “nothing,” what we need is to be a *“new creation”* through faith in Christ Jesus – cp. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#).
6. The result of such faith is by grace through faith we have *“peace and mercy”* from God – [v. 16](#).
7. We rely on grace alone ... through faith alone ... in the *“Lord Jesus Christ”* alone – [v. 18](#).

So What?

- You will never save yourself by means of your flesh from the guilt of your sin caused by your flesh.
- You must humble yourself before a holy God and confess that you are unholy and need to be made holy by the work of Jesus Christ who died for you.
- Once your faith is in Christ alone, you have the resources of Christ to overcome the power of your flesh through the Holy Spirit.

**You must be saved by grace alone through faith alone
in Christ alone.**