

**Faith, Family, and Freedom**  
**Galatians (Recap)**  
**August 10, 2025**

There's a fairly significant golf tournament happening about 2.5 miles from where you're sitting—over at TPC Southwind. After the service, I will feel *led* to walk outside and look for the zeppelin flying over the course. Lots of folks, both from our city and the region, have bought tickets so that they might enjoy the beautiful grounds, hang out with friends, and watch the premier golfers in the world just down the street.

And I must admit that I *too* enjoy watching others play that particular sport. In fact, and maybe this sounds a bit unspiritual, but near the top of my “bucket list” is to one day attend the *most* famous of all golf tournaments—the Masters in Augusta, Georgia.

Now, it's actually fairly easy to get over to Southwind from South Woods. It's just right there. But unfortunately, there are quite a few hindrances to me *ever* stepping foot on the course at Augusta. First, to state the obvious, I'm not a world-class golfer. Nor am I a member of that famously exclusive country club.

But, further, yet *another* hindrance to me ever walking the “Amen Corner” is that not just *anyone* can purchase a pass to the tournament. To even get access to *buy* a ticket, one must enter a lottery. In one sense, Augusta must choose you.

A few weeks back I received my annual email alerting me that my latest entry did not get accepted. But you can bank on it. Next year I'll enter again. My brother-in-law will enter as well, as we've assured one another we'll take the other if we one day win. And I'll keep entering because that golf tournament brings together a number of things I enjoy—beautiful grounds, excellence, and a competition with a certain amount of class.

Now, maybe you're wondering what *this* has to do with a recap of Galatians. I hope that will become clear toward the end.

But, before that, the plan today is to briefly review the letter in its entirety, and in particular the primary message of it. Some would say that this epistle centers on faith. And that's *true*; but *only* if we insist that Galatians is *not* about faith in “faith,” but about faith in a Person. This letter teaches, and emphasizes *repeatedly*, that justifying faith—the faith that saves—is faith in Christ Himself. And that's where we'll begin.

## 1. Faith in Christ

At this point, we know the setting of this letter. Not too long after these Galatian churches had been planted, the Judaizers snuck in, spreading around a false message about the nature of salvation. Not unlike other heresies, their message was—at root—Jesus *plus* something. To speak more broadly, these false teachers, favorable to *aspects* of Judaism and *aspects* of Jesus, began to claim that certain parts of the Mosaic Law were *necessary* for salvation and for inclusion in the people of God.<sup>1</sup>

So, with those opponents in mind, and motivated by his love for the Galatian churches, Paul doesn't mince words. Instead, he writes that **if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed** (1:9).

Of course, elsewhere in the letter Paul makes clear that there *is* no *other* gospel (1:7). The gospel Paul preached is the gospel he received (1:11–24), the one revealed to him by Christ Himself (1:16). It's the gospel the Apostles received and preached as well (2:6–10).

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT, 49. Further, we know based on last week's text that they did so as something of a power play (Gal. 6:13). They weren't even doing what they instructed others to do.

So, what is this message, this good news—the *only* gospel? Chapter 2 goes on to say that **a man is not justified by the works of the Law** (2:16). By that last clause, Paul’s referring to *any* effort to keep *aspects* of the Law with the expectation that doing so will secure a right standing with God.<sup>2</sup> Of course, that “right standing” is what “justification” refers to—a legal term, running throughout the Old Testament, often used in instances where a judge declared a verdict. In those contexts, the judge did not *make* anyone righteous. They, instead, pronounced it to be so.<sup>3</sup> When Paul uses the word “justified” in Galatians, it’s in *that* sense—the legal/forensic one—that he uses it.

So, *right* after Paul declares that *no* flesh—no one—will be justified (declared righteous) by the works of the Law, he *then* gives the good news, writing that **we have believed in Jesus Christ, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ** (2:16).

How might *that* be true? How might we secure a right standing before God by believing in this Man? First, it’s because He bore what Paul, the Galatians, and we earned. Galatians 3 states—unequivocally—that everyone that does not *abide* by *all* things written in the book of the Law are under a curse (Gal. 3:10). That means we can’t just pick and choose from God’s moral Law, deciding which aspects we might obey. To be rightly related to Him, we’re to do each and every thing perfectly. In order to avoid the curse, it’s *all* things, and *always*.

So, of course, *all* of us have fallen woefully short. And therefore, instead of God’s blessing, we’ve earned the Law’s curse. And yet Galatians 3 goes *on* to say that **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us** (Gal. 3:13). He, the only One that had *not* earned it, took our curse upon Himself in order to redeem us from it.

How do we know He took that curse upon Himself? Galatians 3:13 continues: **For it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”** This is the *first* reason why Paul might have a right standing with God, why he might be justified. Christ bore his curse on a tree.

But that’s not all. In fact, immediately after Paul writes that he’d believed in Jesus Christ *so* that he might be justified, he then writes this: **I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me** (Gal. 2:20).

Why does Paul go *there*? Because it’s not *only* that Christ died, Paul did too. And further, it’s not *only* that Christ died, and Paul had been crucified with Him, it’s *also* that because Christ rose, Paul did too. That’s why he *can* write: **Christ lives in me**. When Paul speaks of justification, he makes clear that declaration of righteousness is *only* possible because of our union with Christ. What’s He’s done becomes ours.

This is the good news of Galatians—the only Gospel. In order to be declared righteous, I *must* believe that His life *was* and *is* in my place. My guilt, my curse, was placed on Him, so that His righteousness might be *mine*. And it’s because of Him—it’s in Him alone—that God might be pleased with me.

The message Paul defends is a message of grace. It’s a gospel that centers upon, not what *we* can do, but on what God has done in His Son.

And that’s much of Galatians 1, 2, and the first part of 3.

But Paul’s not done.

## 2. Faith in Christ and God’s Family

Paul’s not done, in part, because this message of grace didn’t come out of nowhere. In fact, he writes that Christ became a curse for us, (Gal. 3:14), **in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**.

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<sup>2</sup> Curtis Vaughan, *Galatians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary, 53.

<sup>3</sup> Schreiner, 155.

In a few verses Paul will speak of what happened “when the fullness of time” came, but not *before* he takes us all the way back to Genesis, to the covenant God made with Abraham there, and in particular with a word *in* that covenant, the word, “seed.”

Paul reads the Old Testament carefully, and rightly. In reading it rightly, he sees God’s promises unfolding little by little. And he sees those promises made *long* before Galatians. Some of the point is this: God didn’t come up with the gospel *after* Israel failed. Nor did He come up with it *after* the book of Malachi, as in, “What do I do now?”

Galatians 3:8 tells us, in fact, that the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham. And then Galatians 3:16 elaborates upon that to say that the “seed” promised Abraham wasn’t primarily referring to *many*, but to one, and that “seed” in the singular was Christ Himself (Gal. 3:16).

Paul does this to help us zoom out, to be in awe of God’s unfolding purposes. And in doing so, he amplifies grace. Because *long* before Paul was ever born, and certainly long before we took a single breath—before every joy and every sorrow—in grace God made a promise to those under a curse.

That promise was spoken to Abraham. Then the Law came—430 years later—to point us to our need, revealing to us our unrighteousness. It led us to look *outside* “self” for deliverance.

So, to summarize Paul’s summary, there’s the promise to Abraham, and then the giving of the Law. And then Paul, with centuries of unfolding revelation in mind, glories in history’s apex: **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son** (Gal. 4:4).

The One the Father had loved for all of eternity—His own and only Son—was sent. And when He was, Galatians 4:4 goes on to say that He was, **born of a woman**. That is, the eternal Son—the One through whom the world was made—was born of Mary. God Himself was *truly* human. The Father sent the *only* One that might reconcile God and man, a Man who was God.<sup>4</sup>

Paul also writes that He, the One born of a woman, was born **under the Law**. This is yet another one of the reasons Paul brings up the Law in Galatians 3. As we’ve noted, the Law reminds us how far our life is from *all* things and *always*. And with *that* in mind, Paul then tells us that the Son of God—Jesus Himself—was born *under* that Law. Keep in mind: If He had lived as a member of any *other* nation, He would *not* have been subject to it. But He *was* so, in order that *He* might do what no one else has, that is, fulfill it.

So, it’s not only that the *only* Person able came at the precise *time* God purposed, He was also sent to the *place* this saving God intended. Person, time, and place. And then Galatians 4:4 goes on to detail the purpose of His coming: **so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive the adoption as sons**.

This is where the seeming “rabbit trail” excurses into Abraham becomes, clearly, nothing close to a sidenote. It’s the *point*, in fact. Galatians 3:29 said this: **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants**. How is *that* so? How might *we*—suburban Christians in 2025—be part of God’s unfolding purposes, united with His people from all of time, even from the book of Genesis? Union with Christ meets adoption. His Sonship makes possible ours: **Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”** (Gal. 4:6).

Which leads us to what *true* children—those loved by their Father—receive. Paul writes, **Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God**. We’re no longer in bondage—no longer slaves. Instead, we’re children, children that receive the inheritance God promised, and, further, children set free to live in and enjoy it.

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<sup>4</sup> George Herbert wrote, “In Christ, two natures met to be your cure,” in Jonathan Gibson, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, 141.

### 3. Faith in Christ and Freedom

After a fascinating parallel between Sinai and Jerusalem, as well as Hagar and Sarah, chapter 4 ends, **So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free woman.**

And then, chapter 5 begins with maybe the simplest assertion in the whole letter: **It was for freedom that Christ set us free.** Just as God didn't open the Red Sea so that the Israelites might crawl back to Pharaoh and shackle up, He didn't send His Son so that we might submit ourselves *again* to a yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1). In fact, after freeing us, He commands us to **keep standing firm** in that freedom (Gal. 5:1).

As we walked through Galatians 5, we noted that this freedom is, first, what Paul's talked about throughout the letter, that is, freedom from sin, self, and the treadmill attempts to earn salvation via the Law. That's the first aspect of freedom.

But it's not the *only* aspect of it. It's *also* the freedom to live as we're intended to live. It's freedom *from* and freedom *for*. Because true freedom isn't merely freedom from instruction altogether; it's finding the right liberating restrictions which thereby instruct.

Because the Son of God didn't die on a cross and bear the wrath of God to give us the liberty to indulge the flesh. We're *not* to live as if He didn't die. Which is what Galatians 5:13 makes clear: **you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.**

Again, to be set free is *also* to be enabled to live as our Maker intends. Which means all *kinds* of things, but Paul emphasizes first our love for one another (Gal. 5:14). Much of Galatians 6 detailed this mutual burden bearing affection. But this love—among God's family—is not only something He *intends*, and commands, it's something He Himself enables. Because when we exercise saving faith, the Spirit of God dwells within us. And when one receives the Spirit, he or she then loves. How do we know *that*? The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

By the Spirit, we're delivered from the works of the flesh—immorality, idolatry, enmity, strife, etc. And by the Spirit, we're freed—God Himself producing *in us* what He intends for us: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, etc.

That well-known fruit is also something God promised long before. The prophet Isaiah declared that there would **come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from its roots shall bear fruit** (Is. 11:1). He, the One God sent, put on flesh, and walked—flawlessly—in the Spirit. And He did so that *we* might too. Again, hear Paul: **It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me** (Gal. 2:20).

So, if we have anything to boast in, it's that in His cross work, the **world has been crucified to me, and I to the world** (Gal. 6:14). Christ was sent—sent to redeem, adopt, and free.

### Conclusion

I mentioned earlier in the sermon my desire to one day attend the Masters. And I mentioned the most plausible ways I might get there. And, if you recall, *none* of them are all that plausible. I'm not going to play my way into that tournament. I'm not, *ever*, going to become a member of that country club, rubbing shoulders with CEOs of Fortune 100 companies. And, *most* likely, I'm not ever going to win a spot via the lottery.<sup>5</sup>

But there's actually another way for future access that I didn't mention. And this is actually the *most* unlikely of them all for me. And that way is not only to play *in* the tournament, but to win it.

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<sup>5</sup> Especially now that I've told you all about it.

Because if you win the Masters, and put on that green jacket, you become an honorary member of Augusta National. And with that come a number of benefits. Every year you're alive, you can play in the tournament. In fact, you can play the course anytime you want. And, notably, you can bring friends and family with you.

I say all that to say that I have a friend. His name is Dave. He and I lived together at Mississippi College years ago while working a summer camp. The Lord used him in my life in significant ways. A few years later he ended up being in our wedding party.

Today he pastors a church in Florida. And you know who's a member of that church? Bubba Watson. If you don't know who he is, he's won the Masters—not once, but twice.

So, even though Dave's not anything close to an incredible golfer, nor some well-known businessman, because Dave knows *him*, nearly every April he heads to Augusta—to enjoy one of the most beautiful settings on the planet.

Did Dave earn that? No, not even close.

Someone *else* earned it. He just receives it.

And that's *much* of the message of Galatians. In fact, it's right at the center of this letter's essence. Every single blessing God promised His people, someone *else* earned for them.

This is the gospel—the *only* one.

So, what do *we* do? We receive—Christ and all His benefits—by faith.

And that's *precisely* what we'll do at this table—look to Him, at what He's done, and believe.