

Love Letters

Lesson 2: Galatians 3

Do you remember a time when you heard a message powerfully preached from the pulpit—piercing your heart and ringing in your ears—then walking out the doors and returning to your former way of doing things? Christians can be the most miserable people on earth having tasted the goodness of God, experiencing the blessings of obedience, only to turn away and exchange that gladness of heart for old sinful habits. Such was the case for the believers in Galatia; Paul had just concluded the point he made at the beginning of his letter—that the gospel of faith and freedom comes from God’s grace alone. Now he will seek to defend his stance by reminding the believers of their past experience in the Christian life. He will prove it is by grace alone that we love God and one another; and that the role of the law is to act as a guide to lead us to Christ.

Day One:

Justified by Faith

Read Galatians 3:1–29 to get a sense of the chapter’s direction. Then read the chapter in more than one translation to apprehend its full impact. Today’s focus will be verses 1–9.

Paul’s repeated use of the word *foolish* in this chapter refers not to a lack of intelligence but a lack of obedience. His message in these opening verses is very clear: “O you dear idiots of Galatia . . . who has been casting a spell over you?” (Phillips translation). The passive interpretation of the word *foolish* implies the *unthinkable*; in the Greek translation it means *unreasonable*. Paul’s accusation against them is that, having known the wonder and freedom of God’s grace at work in their lives, they were allowing themselves to be willfully deceived into giving up and laying down that freedom in exchange for the bondage of the law—quite unthinkable and unreasonable!

1. What statement of truth about the Lord does Paul make as a reminder (verse 1)?

2. Starting with the crucifixion, what series of questions does Paul use to press his point?
 - a. Verse 2

 - b. Verse 3

 - c. Verse 4

d. Verse 5

Paul refers to the believers' past experiences in light of their present circumstances; meaning in other words that if they had suffered so many things at the hands of the Jews, why would they desire to return to the Jewish laws? He goes on to emphasize that they had received the Holy Spirit *not* when they obeyed the law, but rather when they believed!

3. What direct evidence did these believers have of the Spirit's presence among them (verse 5)?

Apparently the Judaizers had used Abraham as their example of one who inherited God's blessings of righteousness to argue that every true follower needed to be circumcised.

4. Paul countered that argument by asserting that Abraham was justified by God on what basis (verse 6)?
5. Accordingly, who qualifies to receive these same spiritual blessings (verse 9)?

Memory verse: Galatians 3:24–25 NASB

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Selah ~

“Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3 NKJV). He believed God's promise of salvation centuries before it was fulfilled on a cross. What about you: do *you* take God at His word or are you more inclined to conclude that seeing is believing? Please share your thoughts, and consider how your perspective affects your obedience to God.

Day Two: The Law Brings a Curse. The Spirit Brings Life

Read Galatians 3:10–18.

With a tone bordering arrogance, Paul goes for the jugular—attacking the Judaizers where they were the strongest. Quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul turns the scripture on them: “Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.” Contrary to what the Judaizers espoused, the law itself cannot save anyone; it can only condemn.

1. To better understand the Old Testament use of the word *curse*, read through Deuteronomy 27. Notice in verses 14–26, twelve times you see the use of the word *cursed*. Make a list below of those who it says are cursed.

Paul’s argument is evident: for any and all who did not obey every law there was a curse—not God’s curse but the law’s curse (Galatians 3:10–12).

2. According to verse 11, who does Paul say are “justified” in God’s eyes?
 - a. How are they justified (verse 13)? (See also Deuteronomy 21:23 to understand what Christ did to lay the foundation for the believer’s faith.)
3. The blessing Abraham received is the promise of the Spirit by faith which Paul refers to here in verse 14. Briefly state what you learn about the Holy Spirit from the following . . .
 - a. Isaiah 32:15
 - b. Ezekiel 37:14
 - c. Luke 11:13
 - d. Luke 24:49
 - e. John 14:16–17
 - f. John 14:26

To further explain the principles of law and grace, in Galatians 3:15–18, Paul turns to an example from the Galatians’ daily life: a contractual agreement. Once a contract is signed and confirmed by two parties it cannot be changed or annulled by anyone. How much more binding is God’s promise to us? This covenant cannot be changed because He does not change. His word is true; He always keeps His promises!

4. To whom did God make the promise of salvation (verse 16)?

The Jews claimed to be the rightful heirs to God's promise because they were Abraham's offspring. Paul here points out that there is only one rightful heir: Jesus. It is through Christ that by faith all believers inherit the promise of salvation. The Judaizers believed that because the law came after Abraham it was superior to grace (salvation by faith). Paul states that the giving of the law 430 years after God's promise of salvation by faith does not nullify the promise. The inheritance—*justification by faith*—is the gift of grace to all who believe. This gift of grace given through Abraham is permanent, unchangeable, and superior to the law.

Day Three:

Kept for the Faith

Galatians 3:19–25

In this section, Paul will now reveal the purpose of the law—that it was always intended to make us aware of our sin and lead us to Christ.

1. According to verses 19–20, in your own words explain why the law was necessary. (Note: It will be helpful to look at these verses in more than one translation.)

The word *transgressions* means a *stepping aside from the right track*. The law made people aware that they were deviating off the right path, but it was meant to be temporary. And it needed a *mediator*—through *angels* by the hand of Moses. Its end came when the Seed appeared (Christ the Messiah).

Does all this mean that the law is opposed to God's promise? Paul answers, "Certainly not!" (verse 21). Its purpose was to reveal that the whole world is condemned under the judgment of sin. Forgiveness in Christ allows all who believe in Him a release from the law's penalty.

2. Think about it: What are some of the ways people seek to be made right with God apart from faith in Christ? Why are some of these ways appealing to us?

If observing the law could have saved mankind, then God would never have sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross. Paul says we were "kept under guard by the law"—literally as if this guardian were taking us by the hand and leading us to where we could meet our Savior and Lord.

3. List a few reasons to rejoice that you are not under sin's curse but rather God's blessing. Have you thanked Him lately?

Selah ~

In God's eyes the only way to "get perfect" is by having your sins forgiven—eliminated altogether. We are each indebted to Him for our sins; we deserve death and eternal separation from Him. Jesus, the perfect Man, didn't owe a debt because He never sinned! When once we believe that He paid our debt on the cross—that His death was our substitutionary payment—and we accept Him by faith into our heart, God considers our debt "paid in full"!

Have *you* received the promise of salvation by placing your faith in Jesus Christ? If not, you may do so by praying the following: “Oh Lord God, this chapter in Galatians has convinced me that Jesus alone is sufficient to save me. It is nothing I can do for myself; I need Him. Thank you for forgiving me and filling me with your Holy Spirit. Thank you that in Your eyes I am now justified: *just as if I’d never sinned*, because Christ has given me His perfection. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for _____ that _____ might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (Insert your name.)

Day Four: Sons and Heirs

Galatians 3:26–29

Sonship, kinship, relationship, connection, bond, family—the law could never do what grace has done by making us adult children of God. His grace operating through our faith allows us the great privilege of becoming sons and daughters. It also unites us together as sisters and brothers in one spiritual family.

1. What unites all believers as “sons” of God?
 - a. As such, what distinctions are removed?

Paul identifies believers as being “baptized into Christ,” identifying with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

2. What is the result for every believer (Romans 6:3–4)?

The word *baptize* literally means to *dip* or *immerse*. If a white piece of cloth is dipped into a colored dye, it takes on the color of the dye. Likewise, the believer takes on the likeness of Christ when we receive Him by faith. Having identified with Him in His death and becoming spiritually united with Him by faith, we are raised to newness of life: dead to sin, alive to God!

3. “Put on Christ” – To be *in Christ* means to clothe yourself with Christ, or putting on His nature, characteristics, attitude and behavior. Take a few minutes to ponder Ephesians 4:20–24. Think about what, specifically, you are to . . .
 - a. Put off:

b. Put on:

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: Take the next step of obedience and record the difference it makes in your life.

Prayer Requests~

Notes

Lined writing area for notes.

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