

Galatians 3

Verses 1-5:

--Paul had established his gospel as exclusive and independent of all humanity authority because it was a revelation from God and not something that came from man. Now he is going to doctrinally establish that the gospel requires us to live by faith and not the works of the law.

--(1) Paul begins by expressing his astonishment again, going so far as to infer they are under the magic spell of these false teachers.

--**Foolish** has the idea of *senseless*. In fact, he says this twice.

--Part of their senselessness is that Christ had been clearly **portrayed** before them. The Greek word was used for laws, edicts, and notices that were put up in public places to be read by all.

--Christ—**as crucified**—had been portrayed to them. Why were they now turning from Him?

--(2) Here Paul asks a very pointed question. He wants them to remember their personal experience of salvation after having recognized Christ crucified. They had received the Spirit of God (Paul obviously considers them believers here) before they had any relation to the law of Moses.

--First, we must notice that Paul considers the Holy Spirit as the identifying mark of those who are truly in Christ.

--Second, works and law are contrasted with hearing and faith. They had clearly come into the reality of the Spirit and new birth through simple belief in the work of Christ crucified—not by working out the OT law.

--(3) Really, this becomes the central question of the epistle. Once saved, what is our relation to the law? Must believers trust in Christ and then observe Torah? This is a rhetorical question that leaves us with a resounding *No!*

--We cannot be made perfect—come to maturity in Christ—through **the flesh**. The flesh is human life outside of the Spirit of God in regeneration.

--This is still an important question for us today because the Church of God all over is being bewitched by the same legalistic works-law approach to God.

Fee (Galatians): "It is amazing how historically Pentecostals, who often know about the Spirit the most, trust him the least, and have found it easy to add external regulations regarding food, dress, and entertainment, as means of 'hemming people in,' as it were. Having begun in the Spirit (3:3), do I myself find it easier to keep myself and others faithful to Christ by establishing rules of conduct that give me a sense of confidence in my obedience to the "rules" rather than living out of profound and pure gratitude to the God who in grace would include me among his children? Is my identity to be found in some modern form of 'circumcision' rather than in trusting God's grace, so that his Spirit produces his character in me (5:22-23)? Why is it, I wonder, that we find law-keeping so attractive?"

--People turn to legalistic and unbiblical forms of Christianity after salvation for so many reasons: Ignorance; Unbelief in God's acceptance of us in Christ; The fleshly need to prove oneself before God; To measure myself against others; To ignore what God actually wants from me; To be something in the sight of others; etc.

--All of these must be rejected. We must continue as we began in childlike faith and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

--(4) Here Paul asks them why they had suffered for Christ if they needed the law. Was their identification with Christ crucified in vain?

--(5) Paul also forces them to consider the continued work of God among them. God was present with them by His Spirit, supplying their needs and working miraculously. Was that all because of the law or by simple childlike faith in the Word of God?

Verses 6-9:

--(6-7) Here Paul makes a transition between their experience and the example of faith that we have in the Scripture. No doubt, he is directing addressing some of the false teachings that the Judaizers were using to *bewitch* the Galatians.

--Here Paul goes all the way back to Abraham (who at this point was not even circumcised as Paul makes clear in Romans 4) to address the issue of faith and works.

--He quotes from Genesis 15 to show that Abraham was accounted righteous before God because of belief, or faith, and not his works. Abraham's faith itself was not meritorious with God in terms of it being better than everyone else's. It was simply that his faith was key because it rested upon the promise of God.

--Abraham, doing no works of the law, believed what God said. So, too, all those who still believe what God says ***are sons of Abraham***.

--(8-9) Paul makes it clear that this was God's plan all along. The gospel—as good news to the Gentiles—was already included in the plan as seen in God's promises to Abraham.

--Notice that the Gentiles being justified is linked with the nations being blessed in this verse. Justification by faith was a blessing God was planning on extending to all nations—not just Israel.

--What we are to take then from Abraham is faith and not circumcision or works of the law.

Verses 10-12:

--Here Paul makes it clear that there are two opposing approaches to living out our faith. The sphere of faith and the sphere of law.

--(10) First, he quotes a combination of **Deut. 27:26 + 28:1** to make his point that the Judaizers are not being honest or consistent. They had an a-la-carte attitude in picking and choosing parts of the law to follow while ignoring what the Scriptures actually says about someone trying to keep ***all*** the law.

5:3: And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

--(11) The law cannot be looked to *for salvation* or mixed in *after salvation*.

James 2:10: For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

--Paul quotes from **Hab. 2:4** to show that the life of the justified is lived in faith and not by works of the law.

--(12) Here Paul quotes from **Lev. 18:5** to show that the law itself is clear on the matter that it cannot be mixed with the path of faith. Seeking to live by works of the law is the opposite of seeking life in Christ by faith.

Verses 13-14:

--(13) Here is a remarkable verse about what Christ has done for us on the cross. Jesus Christ was made a curse sacrificially because of what we were in that curse actually. He has redeemed us by becoming a curse *for us*—substitution.

--Paul then quotes from **Deut. 21:23** to show the law agrees with the necessity for a curse on lawbreakers. This idea of Christ's death *on a tree* is picked up through the NT (**Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29**) as a theme the apostles are not ashamed to preach.

1 Peter 2:24: Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness—by whose strips you were healed.

--In context, Paul's argument must be kept clear. If Christ took the curse of the law for us then there is no need for us to keep it by our own works! We are now set free from the law.

--(14) Why? So that the blessing of justification and the promise of the Holy Spirit can come to both Jew and Gentile through faith.

--Even in the OT the promise of the Holy Spirit was the promise of having the aim of the law fulfilled in us: (**Jer. 31:31-34; Ez. 36:26-27**).

Verses 15-18:

--Paul now anticipates an argument that he, no doubt, heard many times. Such as, Abraham was before the law and so when the law came through Moses that changed things—or at least must be added to the equation.

--(15) Before he does though—take note of the word *brethren*. Paul is still communicating in brotherly love.

--Paul begins to address this with a normal life illustration—that of a covenant or a will. He makes it clear that no one can ignore, change, or add to a ratified covenant or a signed will. Once the document is finished it is finished.

--(16) Paul takes them back to the promises of God in Genesis (**12:1-3; 7; 13:14-15; 15:4-5; 13-16**) and notes that the promise of blessing to all the world was to Abraham's seed in the singular. From Genesis on it was clear that a Person was coming as Messiah.

--It was through that singular Seed (Person) that all the blessings of the promise would come—not just to the Israelites but to a wider group that encompassed both Jews and Gentiles.

--Paul makes it clear that singular seed was Christ. He has already established that we come to Christ by faith. He is working toward **3:29**.

--**(17-18)** Continuing in the context here, what God promised Abraham to do through his Seed singular—Christ—cannot be changed by the law that came 430 years later (**Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40; Acts 7:6**). The law cannot break the covenant of God that came by promise to Abraham. That would ***make the promise of no effect***.

--Again, the two are mutually exclusive in terms of life and approach. The Greek word for ***gave*** in **18** is a unique one and it means: *to give as an act of grace*.

--In the promise God says *I will, I will, I will* and the law says *You shall, You shall not*, etc.

Verses 19-20:

--Here Paul anticipates another logical question. If the law did not give them the Holy Spirit, justify them in God's sight, left them under a curse, and had no relation to God's promise to Abraham's Seed, what was it for? Why bother with it at all?

--Paul answer is very short and clear: ***Because of transgressions***. The law is perfect for the lawless. The law of God revealed sin as a transgression of God's holiness until the coming of Christ.

Romans 4:15: *Because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

--The law brings man a sense of God's holiness and his own sin. It is still good for that purpose!

1 Timothy 1:8-9: *But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate. . .*

--Even today it is important for us to know what the law is for. Interestingly enough, Satan still has many abuse the law by using to prove ourselves holy Vs. having it do what God intends it to do and prove us to be sinners in need of a Savior!

--Secondarily, Paul shows that the law was mediated by angels and Moses to the people (**Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2**) while God acted directly and alone with the promise. Mediation speaks to its secondary and temporary character.

Verses 21-25:

--**(21)** Paul again anticipates another question. So then was the law in conflict with the promises of God? Paul's answer is: ***Certainly not!*** The larger point Paul is making is that the law was never intended to replace, change, or do the work of the promise of God through Abraham's singular Seed.

--If the law could bring righteousness and life there would have never been a promise.

--(22) Here is Paul's summary of how the law was a necessary addition to the promises of God. The law proved us all to be sinners in need of a Savior! It also showed that *faith in Jesus Christ* and not works would be the necessary element to our salvation.

--(23-25) Here Paul uses a few different terms to describe the work of the law in this intermediate period before Christ came and gave us the blessing of the Spirit through faith.

--The term *under guard* was used for a military occupation of a city.

--The word *kept* had the idea of being hemmed in or cooped up.

--Both of these describing the laws work to provide boundaries for sinners. It was good that the law was there for the people of God!

--The term *tutor* in the Greek is *paidagogos*. It is a bit misleading in the English. This was not a schoolteacher per se but an ancient chaperone and disciplinarian. The tutor is usually depicted in ancient drawings with a rod in his hand. Paul seems to speak of himself in **1 Corinthians 4:21** in the same fashion—carrying a rod.

--Paul's point is that once we have come to Christ in faith we are no longer under the watch of this rod carrying disciplinarian.

Verses 26-29:

--(26) This, of course, was Paul's great declaration of the Church. Jew and Gentile making up one Body in Christ Jesus.

--(27) The NT doesn't envision—and I don't think the apostles could imagine—unbaptized believers. This is not baptismal regeneration—which would be against the entire message of the letter! This is the spiritual reality that the physical act symbolizes as described in **Romans 6**.

--(28-29) They had all put on Christ in the same symbolic fashion despite their nationality, social standing, or gender. All believers make up one family in Christ Jesus.

****Ephesians 2:14-15: For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two thus making peace.****

--Do not let people take this out of context. We are all equal in Christ in how we come and in value, but that doesn't mean that differences of individuality or function are gone. You still have nationality, gifts, and gender in a family.

--Feminist want to reinterpret the Bible and say this removes all differences in Biblical roles between men and women. Paul is not speaking about God's ordered roles for different genders in the church or family. He does that in plenty of other places (**1 Cor. 11; 14; Eph. 5; Col. 3; 1 Tim. 2; Titus 2; 1 Peter 3**).

--Liberal interpreters want to take this verse, remove all differences in the sexes, and say that gay or lesbian marriage is now acceptable to God because there is no male or female. Paul is not speaking about God's intent in marriage here.

--There is one point: *All Christians share equally in the blessings of the family of God by faith.*

--This means that my first relation to any brother or sister in Christ should be that of family—no matter the race, social standing, or gender. I too having been a lost sinner saved by Christ. Saved by His work and not my own.