

Free: The Message of Galatians Then & Now

Lesson Four – Be Free!

Galatians 3:1-14

The law's purpose was never to save. Its purpose has always been to be a standard that would show us the magnitude of our sin, our need for grace, and, thus, lead us to Christ. The law was a temporary measure only until faith in Christ was inaugurated. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.

~ Max Anders, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*

I. Their Experience (Galatians 3:1-5)

How can you be so foolish? What they had done was so incomprehensible, Paul asked if they had been bewitched.

“Having embraced the truth at the beginning (that sinners are justified by grace, in Christ, through faith), they have now adopted the view that circumcision and the works of the law are also necessary for justification” (John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Logos).

In Galatians 3:2-5, Paul asks four rhetorical questions:

- A. “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (v. 2)
- B. “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (v. 3)
- C. “Did you suffer so many things in vain?” (v. 4)

The first statement in Galatians 3:4 is generally interpreted as referring to the valuable experiences which the Galatians had in receiving the Spirit on the basis of hearing and believing. Some scholars, however, understand *πάσχω* in Galatians 3:4 as referring to difficult experiences resulting from those who opposed this new faith in Jesus Christ (*Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Logos).

- D. “Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (v. 5)

II. Old Testament Scriptures (Galatians 3:6-9)

(Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Habakkuk)

Abraham is our example. "Then he [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

Righteousness – "the act of doing what God requires" (*Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

III. How are we justified – made right – with God? (Galatians 3:9-14)

Those who live by the law are under a curse (v. 10). To be cursed is to be under judgment, condemned by God.

There are only two paths:

- The path of faith that leads to righteousness.
The fruit of righteousness is Christ-like character. Christ came to seek and to save the lost, He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- The path of works (law) that leads to the curse.
The fruit of legalism is pride, judgment, competition, petty comparison, and division.

John Stott writes:

The challenge of this passage is straightforward. We must renounce the proud folly of supposing that we can establish our own righteousness or make ourselves acceptable to God. Instead, we must come humbly to the cross, where Christ bore our curse, and cast ourselves entirely upon His mercy. And then, by God's sheer grace, because we are in Christ Jesus by faith, we shall receive justification, eternal life and the indwelling Spirit. The 'blessing of Abraham' will be ours (John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Logos).

Colossians 1:21-22: "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (NIV).

"In both Romans and Galatians, Paul is referring to the fact that when a person exercises faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is placed in transcendent spiritual union with Christ in the historical event of His death and resurrection, in which the penalty of sin was paid in full" (John McArthur, *Galatians*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1987, 59).

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Galatians 2:20-21).

Timothy George notes,

Elsewhere Paul used the expression "to die to" not only with reference to the law but also in relation to the self, sin, and the world. In each of these cases Paul meant that his relationship to these entities—self, sin, world, law—had been so decisively altered by his union with Christ that they no longer control, dominate, or define his existence" (Timothy George, *The New American Commentary: Galatians*, Logos).

A. Crucified – past tense (an accomplished fact) – Galatians 2:20

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a **new** person. The old life is gone; a **new** life has begun" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

B. Christ lives in me – present tense

C. Live by faith in the Son of God

Who is the author of division?

God blesses unity. The only way to be united is to die to our flesh and come alive in Christ.

Let's consider a scenario –

You are at work and a fellow employee offends you. Your feelings are hurt, and you begin to pull away and dwell on the offense. As you dwell on the offense, it grows. Now you believe your rights have been violated. You tell someone else in the office and people begin to take sides. DIVISION is demonic!

"If a kingdom is **divided** against itself, that kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24).

"But He [Jesus] knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Any kingdom **divided** against itself is laid waste; and a house **divided** against itself falls'" (Luke 11:17).

Psalm 133 – God commands a blessing on unity.

We are commanded: "being diligent to **preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**" (Ephesians 4:3).

Some additional scenarios:

A friend invites some people to go to lunch and you are not invited.

You are dating someone whose father will not accept you because of the color of your skin.

You see a social media post of some of your friends and you are not in it.

Your mother-in-law says something that you take the wrong way.

What do you do? How do you respond?

We live under one law – the law of love (Galatians 5:14)

The difference in living under the law or grace - under the law, I am striving to "do" all I am supposed to do. Under grace, I am surrendering that I might "be" who God desires me to be as I reflect Him to a lost and dying world. The "doing" flows out of the "being."

Grace – What God requires, God provides.

Faith – If I believe, I will see.

Surrender – If I surrender, I will experience.

The greater the surrender, the greater the freedom!

I die to my flesh so that I can come alive to God, and alive to you – each and every one of you. So that I can see you as Christ does. Not as competition, someone to envy, be jealous of or look down upon. But, instead as a fellow struggler on the way home. A sister who can enrich my life and whose life I can bless through service and words of hope and life.