

## Galatians – Chapter 3 (NASB)

“C.H. Spurgeon told a story about two men in a boat caught in severe rapids. As they were being carried swiftly downstream toward the perilous rocks and falls, men on the shore tried to save them by throwing out a rope. One man caught the rope and was saved. The other man, in the panic of the moment, grabbed a log that was floating alongside. It was a fatal mistake! The man who caught the rope was drawn to shore because he had a connection to the people on land. The man who clung to the log was carried downstream by the rapids ... never to be found.” (Anders, Max. Holman New Testament Commentary)

### *Faith Brings Righteousness*

*3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 So then, 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?*

In the illustration from Spurgeon, the rope from shore is salvation through faith in Jesus and the log is salvation by the Law.

In verse 1, Paul is saying that to believe what they believe, they must be under an evil spell and the spell was cast by the Judaizers. The Judaizers were Jewish believers that had tried to combine their Jewish trust in the Law with salvation through faith in Jesus. They believed that salvation was for God's chosen, the Jews. They believed that to claim the salvation offered through Jesus, you had to convert to Judaism. In Acts, Paul went Jerusalem council of Christians because of this teaching. Ultimately, the council said Gentiles (non-Jews) did not need to convert to Judaism, they were just to follow four rules or laws. They said that the converts should refrain from eating blood, meat containing blood, and meat of animals that were strangled, and not participate in fornication and idolatry. Paul did not buy into these laws. He had full faith in salvation through faith in Jesus.

To Paul, it is clear that salvation comes not from our works but the work of Jesus on the cross. Paul says not only does faith in Jesus bring salvation but it also brings the Holy Spirit. In verse 4, the NASB uses the word suffer but the NLT uses the word experienced. Paul is not necessarily talking about persecution because having the Holy Spirit would not have been bad. In verse 5, Paul asks does God to give them the power of the Holy Spirit because they obey the Law or because they believe what they heard about Jesus.

“In the midst of his discourse on Christian righteousness, Paul breaks off and turns to address the Galatians. “O foolish Galatians,” he cries. “I have brought you the true Gospel, and you received it with eagerness and gratitude. Now all of a sudden you drop the Gospel. What has got into you?” Martin Luther

“The [role] of the law is to show us the disease in such a way that it shows us no hope of cure; whereas the [role] of the gospel is to bring a remedy to those who are past hope.” John Calvin

*3:6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*

Paul uses the example of Abraham to explain his point. He lived before the Law but he was credited with righteousness by faith in God. Paul says that the “real” of children God or spiritual descendants are the ones who put their faith in God and not his physical descendants. The Jews are said to be the children of Abraham but his true children are those that put their faith in God. Paul quotes Genesis 22:18 that says, “*All nations will be blessed through you (Abraham).*” but then corrects it in verse 9 which says that only the nations with faith in God will be blessed.

“The blessing we receive with believing Abraham is not the blessing of fantastic wealth and power, though Abraham was extremely wealthy and powerful. The blessing is something far more precious: the blessing of a right standing with God through faith.” (Guzik)

*3:10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “He who practices them shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to point out that the Law condemns and does not save. If you break one law then you are guilty of breaking the entire Law. Then he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 which says, “But the righteous will live by his faith.

“The hypocritical doers of the Law are those who seek to obtain a righteousness by a mechanical performance of good works while their hearts are far removed from God. They act like the foolish carpenter who starts with the roof when he builds a house.” (Luther)

Paul destroys the Judaizers' belief that a person is saved through the law. He points out that living by faith is not the same as living by the Law. Romans 3:22 says, “*We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*” (NLT). Our righteousness comes from our faith in Jesus Christ and not by any acts or works of righteousness. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

“Redeemed has the idea of “buying back” or “purchasing out of.” It isn’t just rescuing; it is paying a price to rescue. Jesus bought us out from under the curse of the law.” (Guzik)

Gentiles can receive the same blessing that Abraham received if they have faith in Christ Jesus.

### *Intent of the Law*

*3:15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ. 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.*

Paul gives an example of an irrevocable (NLT) agreement. This type of agreement cannot be changed or added to. Paul is saying that this type of agreement is between men and how much more unchangeable the agreement if it was from God. In verse 16, Paul says that God's promise to Abraham is about one particular seed and not all of his seeds. The "seeds" at that time could have been the Jews but could be interpreted as all believers because we are his spiritual seeds and not his physical seeds. So Abraham's salvation was given to him by grace. It was another 430 years before God gave the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The one seed that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" is Jesus.

"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." (Anders)

***3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.***

Paul asks an important question. If the Law doesn't save us, then why was the Law given? He then answers his own question. He says that it was only meant for a set time until the seed (NASB) or child (NLT) which is the Christ, came to bring salvation to the world.

"Moses needed a mediator between himself and God, but we don't need a mediator between us and Jesus – He is our mediator. The law was a two-party agreement brought by mediators. Salvation in Jesus by faith is received by a promise." (Guzik)

"Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! The law is not something evil, opposing God's promise. The problem with the law is found in its inability to give strength to those who desire to keep it. If the law could have given life, then it could have brought righteousness. But the Law of Moses brings no life; it simply states the command, tells us to keep it, and tells us the consequences if we break the command." (Guzik)

Sin has us held as prisoners (NLT) and Paul reiterates what is written in John 8:36. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Salvation comes down to faith in Jesus.

***3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

These verses spell out why we do not need the Law but rely only on faith in Jesus for our salvation. After the angels delivered the Law to Moses, the Law was our tutor (NASB) or guardian (NLT). Once grace was revealed, we no longer need the Law.

"The whole purpose of the law is to bring us to Jesus. Therefore, if someone doesn't present the Law in a manner that brings people to faith in Jesus, they aren't presenting the Law properly. The way Jesus

presented the Law was to show people that they could not fulfill it and needed to look outside of their law-keeping to find a righteousness greater than the Scribe and the Pharisees (Matthew 5:17-48) (Guzik)

***3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.***

Paul is telling the Galatians that it doesn't matter where you were born the first time (Jew or Gentile), what matters is through faith in Christ Jesus you are all one people. We are all sons (NASB), children (NLT, NIV) of God.

"It should be stressed that this is the baptism that really saves us: our immersion into Jesus. If a person isn't baptized into Christ, he could be dunked a thousand times into water and it would make no eternal difference. If a person has been baptized into Christ, then he should follow through and do what Jesus told him to do: receive baptism as a demonstration of his commitment to Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). (Guzik)

In the final verse, Paul points out that we belong to Christ and we are descendants of Abraham and finally joint-heirs with Jesus according to the Abrahamic covenant.

In chapter 3, Paul gives six points to show the Galatians the superiority of grace over law.

- (1) By grace, salvation and the Holy Spirit are given.
- (2) Abraham, the father of our people, was saved by grace.
- (3) Grace gives redemption and salvation; the law brings condemnation.
- (4) Abraham was saved by grace hundreds of years before the law was given.
- (5) The law's purpose is to act as a guide that leads us to Christ.
- (6) By grace, a love relationship with God and one another is obtained.