

Galatians 3¹ *Righteous by Faith*

In chapters three and four Paul uses six arguments to prove that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works of the law. In this lesson, we will look at the first three².

The Personal Argument 3:1-5

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—

1. Paul is speaking the truth in love to the Galatians when he tells them they are “foolish”. He is amazed that the very people he taught so well would embrace this false doctrine.
 - a. Foolish is “anoetos” which means “not understanding”, “not perceiving”, not applying the mind, senseless, an unworthy lack of understanding; describes someone who does not govern his lusts; is associated with evil desire.³
 - b. *It denotes the stupidity that arises from deadness and impotence of intellect. It means “lacking in the power of perception unwise.”-Wuest*
 - c. The Amplified translates the phrase this way, “O YOU poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians!”
2. Bewitched is *baskaino*⁴ to *malign*, that is, (by extension) to *fascinate* (by false representations): - bewitch.
3. “This is the only thing”; If they can get this argument, they can get the whole thing!
4. Paul had personally taught the Galatians and had portrayed to them Jesus Christ crucified (which he just said in the verses proceeding that they were nullifying by embracing the law.
5. Verse two is rhetorical. We receive the Spirit by faith, not by keeping the law.
 - a. *We commonly believe that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works; and yet many formulas for salvation, such as the “sinner’s prayer” hint of a sort*

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is taken from the **New King James Version (NKJV)**
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² Titles of arguments and their divisions are from Be Free by Warren Wiersbe. Commentary is by SGF.

³ Vines

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Greek definitions are from Strong’s Concordance.

of works salvation. Many believe and teach that one cannot be saved until one “forsakes all sin” or “makes Jesus the Lord of your life”, when actually; it is not by any such work that we are saved, but only by HIS grace through faith in HIM⁵.

6. Verse three is meant to reason with the Galatians. **“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”** The answer is perfectly clear. **NO! You CANNOT be made perfect by the flesh!!!**
 - a. *The words “made perfect” are from epiteleo which means “to bring something to the place where it is complete.”-Wuest*
 - b. What does Paul mean by “flesh”? In context he is referring to adding the law as a means of bettering what Jesus accomplished on the cross. The idea is that Jesus got the ball rolling and now WE have to keep it going. Paul is reasoning with them in strong language: **THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE.**
 - c. *Thus these Christians who had begun their Christian lives in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, now were depending upon self-effort to continue in them the work of sanctification which the Holy Spirit had begun.-Wuest's*
7. Paul reminds them of the persecutions they had already endured for following Jesus. **Did they really want all of that to be for nothing?**
8. In verse 5 Paul takes the argument a step further using their personal experience. They had evidently seen God do many miracles among them by His Spirit. He’s asking them to recall how that happened. Was it because they fasted and prayed and were circumcised and followed the law? **NO!** The miracles had all happened by faith, not works.
9. So, in this personal argument Paul is asking the Galatians to reflect upon their own experience with Jesus. They had come to Him by grace through faith and not through the works of the law. They had seen miracles take place apart from the works of the law. So, he’s asking them, if all of these things happened by the Spirit (by grace through faith and apart from the law), why would they be so foolish as to seek to add the law which had played no role in their salvation or miracles?

The Scriptural Argument 3:6-14

⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁷ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

⁵ To confirm or refute this statement, please read the book of Acts and carefully take note of the different conversions to Jesus. You will find that NONE of them were based on “the sinner’s prayer” nor “making Jesus Lord of your life”.

¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ has 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 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

10. Paul uses scriptural facts about the promise God made to Abraham and the Law of Moses.

<u>Sons of Abraham</u> <i>Both Jew and Gentile Believers</i>	<u>Those Under the Law</u> <i>The Jews ONLY</i>
Promise to both Jew and Gentile	The covenant (law) ONLY with the Jews.
Both Jew and Gentile justified by faith	Attempted righteousness by obeying the law only for the Jews
Both Jew and Gentile are sons of Abraham by faith in Jesus.	Only the Jew had this covenant with God.
Blessed apart from works	Blessed if obedient. Cursed if not.
Those who are justified by faith LIVE	Live doing the law (never justified by it)
Redeemed from the curse of the law because Jesus became a curse for us	<i>For those who insist on receiving the law, Paul informs them that if they don't keep ALL of it, they are cursed, and even if they could keep it perfectly, they would still not be justified before God.</i>
Recipients of the blessing of Abraham	
Both Jew and Gentile receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.	

11. Verse 9: Paul is saying that people have a choice to believe in the message of grace.

The Judaizers taught that the law was a means of justification. But Paul shows that the law is a means of condemnation, and that it is the Lord Jesus who rescues us from its condemnation through the blood of His Cross (3:10-14).-Wuest

12. Obeying the Law is NOT how the promise made to Abraham is obtained.

The Judaizers maintained that their knowledge of the law entitled them to the blessings which were attached to the sons of Abraham. Our Lord said to representatives of this same system: "Ye are constantly searching the scriptures; and in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:39, 40).-Wuest's

Verse 12: The statement, "The law is not of faith" means that the two principles of law and of faith as a means of justification are mutually exclusive of one another.-Wuest

Verse 13: The word "redeemed" is from "exagorazo", the general significance of which is "to redeem from slavery."-Wuest

The Logical Argument 3:15-29

¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. ¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

13. Paul now lists logical facts to lead the Galatians to an understanding of their right-standing with God by faith alone in Jesus Christ and shows that they do not have to come under the law to have equality with the Jewish believers before God.

a. No one can add to or annul a confirmed covenant.

Two distinct methods of invalidating a contract are, first, to annul it directly, and second, to impose new conditions which are diametrically opposed to its spirit or purpose. The doctrine of the Judaizers at first glance appeared only to add some harmless new conditions to the covenant of grace. But the character of these new conditions virtually annulled it. Works added to faith would annul the entire covenant since any dependence upon works means that it is necessary to abandon faith.-Wuest

- b. The promises were made to Abraham and His Seed (not “seeds” as many, but Seed, referring to Christ).
- c. The Law which came 430 years after the Covenant with Abraham could not and was not capable of nullifying the promise made to Abraham. In other words, the promise continued.

Verse 18 The word gave is from charizomai. This is a specialized word. It denotes not merely a gift, but a gift which is given out of the spontaneous generosity of the giver's heart, with no strings tied to it. The Greek word grace (charis) has the same root and the same meaning.-Wuest

- d. The inheritance God promised to Abraham did not have any law as a condition. The covenant He made with Abraham one-sided. Abraham was not allowed to be party to that covenant (Genesis 15). God promised it. Abraham believed it and in no way earned it or deserved it.
 - i. In fact, on several occasions, Abraham's actions deserved a rebuke, but the rebuke never came and the Promise remained in effect.
- e. The Law was an agreement between God and man via the mediation of angels. Man agreed that he would keep all of the Law. God agreed that if they did, He would bless them, and if they didn't, He would curse them. **THEY BROKE THE COVENANT, NOT GOD.**

The law therefore was not given because of the existence of transgressions, but to show hamartia (sin) in its true light, an overstepping of what is right into the realm of what is wrong.-Wuest

At Sinai, the law was given through two intermediaries, angels and Moses. The people stood afar off. Grace says, "Come nigh," law says, "Stand off."-Wuest

- f. However, the promise God made with Abraham was not between Abraham and God. It was only conditioned on God's promise, not Abraham's behavior.
- g. The Law is not against the promises. It is so good that if a law could have brought righteousness, then righteousness would have come from the law...**but righteousness doesn't come from obeying the law.**

Grace is unconditional. There are no strings tied to it. God is One, that is, He acts alone without a mediator in respect to the promise of grace. Therefore grace is superior to law.-Wuest

Vs. 20, Translation: Now, the mediator is not (a go-between representing the interests) of one (individual), but God is one (individual).

- h. God's wisdom was to make all men guilty (all under sin) so that all could be justified by faith in Jesus...both Jew and Gentile. The Jew could not be justified by the law, and Paul is saying is **NEITHER CAN A GENTILE.**
- i. Only by faith do we become partakers of the promise.
- j. The law was only meant to serve as a tutor until Christ came. This meant, the law kept them on the road TO the Messiah, but could only point the way.

The answer is that the law and the promises are not in conflict because each has a distinct function. The law is a ministry of condemnation. The promises are a ministry of salvation. The law judges a person on the basis of obedience or disobedience. The promises judge man on a basis of faith.-Wuest

- k. However, Paul states very clearly that once the Jew receives Christ, he no longer needs a tutor; that is to say, the Jew no longer needs the law.
- l. Obviously, the Gentile who was never at any time under the law, is not under the law.
- m. Verse 26 says that we are all full sons and daughter of God by faith in Jesus...both Jew and Gentile. One is not better than the other because he was from the law. The Gentile did not need to come under the law to obtain full sonship. Sonship is by faith alone for both Jew and Gentile.

*The word translated “children” is **Huios** and is the important word here. This word signifies someone of full age. Under law, the individual was in his minority and under a guardian. Now, under grace, he has attained his majority, having outgrown the surveillance of his former guardian.-Wuest*

1 John 3:1

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us,
that we should be called children of God!*

- n. Both Jew and Gentile baptized into Christ (born again) have put on Christ.
- o. **THERE ARE NO CLASSES IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. The Gentile believer did not need to be improved.**
- p. Jewish believers are not superior to Gentile believers.
- q. Believers who were free were not superior to believers who were slaves.
- r. Male believers are not superior to female believers.
- s. We are all ONE in Christ.
- t. All those and only those who believe in Jesus are sons of Abraham and heirs according to the promise.

Vs. 28 The Pharisees used to pray everyday “I thank thee God that I am a Jew not a Gentile, a man not a woman, and a freeman not a slave” All of these distinctions are removed in Christ.-Weirsbe

Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.