

Galatians 3:1–29

From Faith to Freedom: Why the Law Cannot Perfect What Grace Began

Introduction: How Grace Was Replaced With Rules

Paul now turns to Galatians chapter three and confronts the central error threatening the churches in that region. Galatia was not a city, but a broad area with many congregations established through Paul's ministry. After his departure, teachers arrived who insisted that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough. They taught that believers must add obedience to the law—especially circumcision—in order to be fully righteous.

This teaching sounded spiritual, disciplined, and reasonable. But it struck at the heart of the gospel. Paul closed the previous chapter with a statement that frames everything that follows:

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

If righteousness could be achieved by rules, rituals, or self-effort, then the cross was unnecessary. The very fact that Jesus died declares that no human being can make himself righteous before God.

1. Begun by the Spirit, Not Perfected by the Flesh

Galatians 3:1–3

Paul opens with a sharp rebuke, not because he is angry, but because the danger is real.

"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?"

They had not merely heard about the cross—they had seen Christ vividly proclaimed as crucified for them. Paul takes them back to the moment of their conversion.

"Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

The answer is obvious. They received the Spirit by faith, not by works.

"Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

The Christian life begins by grace, continues by grace, and is completed by grace. Attempting to improve God's work through human effort is not spiritual maturity—it is spiritual confusion.

2. God Works Through Faith, Not Human Merit

Galatians 3:4–5

Paul presses the point further.

"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?"

God does not respond to human worthiness. He responds to faith. Miracles, spiritual power, and divine blessing are never rewards for moral performance. They are expressions of God's grace.

This truth often troubles people when they discover that God has worked through deeply flawed individuals. But God does not validate a person's righteousness by working through them. He honors faith—often the faith of those who come to Him seeking mercy.

God gives because He is gracious, not because we are deserving.

3. Abraham: Righteousness Credited by Faith

Galatians 3:6–9

Paul now anchors his argument in Scripture.

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Abraham was not declared righteous because of his actions, but because of his faith. His obedience flowed from belief, but it was his belief that God credited as righteousness.

“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

Abraham is the father of a spiritual family, not merely a physical one. All who believe—Jew or Gentile—become heirs of the promises God made to him.

“So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

The blessing was always intended for all nations, fulfilled through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. The Law Brings a Curse, Not Righteousness

Galatians 3:10–12

Paul now exposes the danger of relying on the law.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.”

Why?

“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

The law demands perfection. Partial obedience is failure. To choose law as the basis for righteousness is to accept a standard no one can meet.

“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The law operates on doing. Faith operates on trusting. The two are fundamentally different systems.

5. Christ Redeemed Us From the Curse

Galatians 3:13–14

Here Paul reaches the heart of the gospel.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.”

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. By hanging on the tree, He took upon Himself the curse our sin deserved.

“That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The cross removed the curse; the resurrection declares that Jesus Christ is God, Savior, and Lord. Because He lives, the promise of the Spirit is available to all who believe.

6. The Promise Cannot Be Cancelled by the Law

Galatians 3:15–18

Paul explains that God’s covenant with Abraham was a promise, not a contract.

“Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.”

God’s promise came first. The law, given four hundred and thirty years later, cannot cancel what God had already pledged.

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made... ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”

The blessing was always centered on Jesus Christ. Through Him, the promise flows to all who believe.

7. The Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:19–25

So why was the law given?

“It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come.”

The law exposes sin and shows our need for a Savior. It was never meant to save.

“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

Once Christ has come, the tutor’s role is finished.

“After faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

The law reveals the disease; Christ provides the cure.

8. One Family, One Standing, One Savior

Galatians 3:26–29

Paul concludes with a powerful declaration of unity.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

All believers share the same standing before God.

“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.”

No spiritual hierarchy exists in Christ. Access to God is equal for all who come through faith in Jesus.

“If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Practical Application for Believers

- Do not measure your standing with God by performance
- Stop trying to improve what God began by grace
- Live to please God, not to earn His favor
- Expect God’s blessing based on His promise, not your worthiness
- Walk daily in faith, not fear

A Challenge for Believers

Having begun in the Spirit, refuse to return to the flesh. Legalism robs joy, distorts grace, and weakens faith. Stand firm in the freedom Christ has given you.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

You cannot make yourself righteous. The law cannot save you. Good intentions are not enough.

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for your sins. He rose from the dead, proving that He is Lord. Through faith in Him, you can be forgiven, declared righteous, and brought into God’s family.

Turn from sin. Trust in Jesus Christ. Receive the gift of eternal life today.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your grace and for the finished work of Your Son. Teach us to live by faith, to rest in Your promises, and to walk in the freedom Christ has secured for us. Amen.