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      - (1) Paul is not the least bit submissive to the Judaizers, (5)
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- II. Paul states his case concerning justification by faith alone, (Chs. 3-4)
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    - 1) Paul explains their error, (1)
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- 3) Paul impresses upon them to think, (3-5)
- 4) Paul gives them an Old Testament example of justification through faith alone, (6, 7)
- 5) Paul illustrates through the Old Testament Scriptures that God Himself intended that justification come through faith alone, (8)
- 6) Paul states in no uncertain terms, those who are genuinely justified, (9)
2. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE LAW, (3:10-12)**
  - 1) Paul explains that those who look to obeying the law as their Messiah, only end up being cursed by it, (10)
  - 2) Paul explains that those who look to faith in Christ as their Messiah, end up being blessed by Him, (11)
  - 3) Paul explains that you have to choose one or the other because you can't mingle them, (12)
3. **PAUL ADDRESSES GOD'S GRACE, (3:13-14)**
  - 1) Christ died on the cross to provide for our redemption, (13)
  - 2) The Holy Spirit indwells us to provide for our sanctification, (14)
4. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S GRACE OVER THE LAW, (15-18)**
  - 1) The intent of God's covenant of grace cannot be ignored or changed, (15)
  - 2) The heirs of God's covenant of grace cannot be overlooked or deprived, (16)
  - 3) The timing of God's covenant of grace cannot be denied or disregarded, (17)
  - 4) The truth of God' covenant of grace cannot be misinterpreted or concealed, (16)
  - 5) The law cannot give life, (21)
  - 6) The law can only reveal and condemn sinners, (22a)
  - 7) The law can only present the need for justification; it cannot provide it, (22b)
  - 8) The law held us in bondage, (23)
  - 9) The law treated us like little children, (24a)
    - (1) Teaching us about the object of grace, (24b)
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5. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE POSITION GRACE PLACES US IN, (26-29)**
  - 1) The position of adulthood, (26)
  - 2) The position of Identity, (27a)
  - 3) The position of standing, (27b)
  - 4) The position of equality, (28)
  - 5) The position of blessing, (29)

**Chapter summary – In the first two chapters of the epistle Paul established the divine origin of his apostleship and his message. Then he turned to the Galatians who were being urged to add works to faith, to keep the Mosaic Law in addition to placing faith in Christ as the grounds of acceptance before God. The Galatian Christians would receive, the Judaizers thought, a more complete salvation and a greater sanctification if they would obey the Law. But, Paul argued, to supplement the work of Christ is to supplant it. There can only be one way of salvation, and that is by faith in Christ alone.<sup>1</sup>**

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II. Paul states his case concerning justification by faith alone, (Chs. 3-4)

**1. PAUL ADDRESSES THE GALATIAN BELIEVERS, (3:1-9)**

**1) Paul explains their error, (1)**

 **INTERPRETATION:**

<sup>1</sup> (In a mixture of love, astonishment and anger, Paul turns from the Judaizers and towards the Galatian believers and says), **O foolish** (you lazy and careless), **Galatians!**<sup>2</sup> **Who has bewitched** (i.e., charmed, hypnotized or fascinated), **you** (so thoroughly) **that you should not obey the truth** (the truth that you clearly heard, willingly received and personally experienced as it powerfully transformed you), **before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified**, (as Paul had so thoroughly, and vividly and painstakingly taught them about the Person of Christ and His necessary work on the cross? “You have erred!” Paul says.)

**NOTES:**

 **COMMENTARY:**

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Logos software.

<sup>2</sup> The Galatian believers were not stupid or ill taught concerning spiritual matters. They were simply not using their heads. They were not being like the Bereans and thinking the issue through. The Galatian believers were doing exactly what he warned the believers in Ephesus about, **“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—“** (Eph 4:14, 15)

Paul was modeling before the Galatian believers exactly what they should have be modeling towards the Judaizers. **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,”** (1 Pe 3:15). Think of how it would have blessed Paul’s heart if they had!

**F APPLICATION:**

When believers are caught up into false teaching, who is to blame? If you say insufficient pastoral leadership or good doctrinal teaching at the church that may be true, or partly so. But what did Jesus warn his disciples about in Matthew 10:16? Jesus said that He was, “**sending [them] out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.**” Could another possibility be that many believers get caught up into false teaching because they themselves have become spiritually lax or lazy? They have not met their responsibility to grow spiritually and to remain spiritually sharp. Could it be his or her own fault? God tells us in Romans 14:10-12, “**But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**”

Where are you on these matters? Are we as pastors doing our part in shepherding you? Is the church family doing its part in ministering to one another? Are you doing your part in growing on your own?

## 2) Paul calls them to give an account, (2)

<sup>2</sup> **This only I want to learn from you** (answer me one thing): **Did you receive the** (Holy), **Spirit by the works of the law**, (by fulfilling the requirements of the Law of Moses), **or by the hearing of faith** (in the Person and work of Christ ALONE?—The experience was real, “*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*” [Ro 8:16]—but how did you receive Him? It’s one or the other. It can’t be both!)<sup>3</sup>

## F APPLICATION:

Though many people experience an immediate effect when the Holy Spirit enters their lives, the most lasting changes are subtle. The reality of forgiveness, the wonder of eternal life, and the end of fears may lead to profound feelings. But the Holy Spirit does not concern himself so much with our temporary feelings as with the facts of moral and spiritual change. The very desire to grow in Christ, to find guidance in the Scriptures, and to tell others about Christ demonstrate the Spirit’s presence in us (see [Romans 8:1–11](#)).<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES:

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<sup>3</sup> The question was rhetorical. Paul knew full well that they did receive the Holy Spirit and how they received Him. Paul was there. He had shared the true gospel of Christ with them. He witnessed God drawing them to Himself. Paul knew they had received the Holy Spirit by faith. The Galatian believers didn’t have to answer him and they knew they didn’t. They probably just hung their heads in shame.

<sup>4</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Galatians. Life application Bible commentary*, Page 87. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

**COMPARISON OF HUMAN EFFORT VS. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT**

It's easy to try to attain maturity in Christ the wrong way. Much of devoted and dedicated service is in reality human effort. All of our service and good work must flow out of a life of faith and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

	<i>Religion by Human Effort</i>	<i>Life in the Spirit</i>
Goal	Please God by our own good works	Trust in Christ and then live to please God
Power	Good, honest effort through self-determination	The Holy Spirit in us helps us do good work for Christ's kingdom
Control	Self-motivation; self-control	Christ in me; I in Christ
Results	Chronic guilt, apathy, depression, failure, constant desire for approval	Joy, thankfulness, love, guidance, service, forgiveness <sup>5</sup>

**3) Paul impresses upon them to think, (3-5)**

<sup>3</sup> **Are you so foolish?** (so reluctant to use your head and not see something as clear as this? Another way Paul could have said it is, "Certainly you have a brain left in your head. Think!") **Having begun** (being justified), **in the Spirit** (being convicted of your sin by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit upon your confession and repentance of sin),<sup>6</sup> **are you now being made perfect** (sanctified), **by the flesh**, (Do you think that the law can sustain and finish what it could not even start? The insinuation is, "That's ludicrous!")

<sup>5</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Galatians. Life application Bible commentary*, Page 86. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (Jn 16:8-11)

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Ac 13:52)

- <sup>4</sup> **Have you suffered so many things in vain**<sup>7</sup> (have you suffered them for professing to be justified and in fact really weren't!? Was it all for nothing? Did you suffer for something you didn't even possess)—**if indeed** (in fact), **it was in vain** (as would be the case if what the Judaizers were saying was true)?<sup>8</sup>
- <sup>5</sup> **Therefore** (seeing that God the Spirit convicted you your need of salvation, showed you the way of salvation through Christ, God the Son, and indwelt you when you received salvation), **He** (God the Father), **who supplies the** (the company and power of the), **Spirit to you** (the word “*supplies*” means to supply in abundance, very generously, freely),<sup>9</sup> **and** (as well), **works miracles** (those things that you know are contrary to nature), **among you** (e.g., healing the crippled man since birth, [Acts 14:8-11]), **does He do it by the works of the law** (by fulfilling the rituals and commands of the law), **or by the hearing of faith**, (faith in the grace, power and authority of the Giver)?

“Do you really believe the miracles in the Bible?” a skeptic asked a new Christian who had been a terrible drinker.

“Of course I do!” the believer replied.

The skeptic laughed. “Do you mean that you really believe that Jesus could turn water into wine?” he asked.

“I sure do! In my home He turned wine into food and clothing and furniture!”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> **AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA**—“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul...the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.” (Ac 13: 44-45, 50) The result of the suffering is that the Galatian, “disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” (Ac 13:52)

**AT ICONIUM**—“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren...And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them.” (Ac 14:1-2, 5)

**AT LYSTRA**—“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.” (Ac 14:19)

<sup>8</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (Jn 15:19)

<sup>9</sup> It was used of patrons of the arts who underwrote productions of Greek plays and of patriotic citizens who gave of their wealth to help support their country's army or government. It was also used of a groom's vow to love and care for his bride. MacArthur. *Galatians*. Logos Software.

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Ac 1:8)

<sup>10</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Ga 3:1. Logos Software.

## F APPLICATION:

**HOW ARE WE TO DISCERN WHEN A CHALLENGING MESSAGE CLARIFIES OUR FAITH AND WHEN IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN HUMAN SPECULATION? THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY BE OF HELP:**



NOTES:

1. To what degree do I find this new teaching present and illustrated in Scripture?
  2. Does this new teaching emphasize faith instead of works for salvation?
  3. Does the life of this new teacher consistently model, not only what he/she teaches, but what Christ taught?
  4. Does this new teaching advocate the appropriation of the Spirit by believing the Word of God?<sup>11</sup>
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1. God explicitly tells us that we are not saved by good works. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph 2:8-9)
  2. God says that we are saved to do good works. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10
  3. God tells us that we are equipped to perform good works. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Ti 3:16-17
  4. God tells us that because we are equipped to perform good works, they should abound in our daily lives. God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 2 Co 9:8
  5. Because of our equipping to perform good works, we must be faithful in performing them. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; Col 1:9-10
  6. Thus, God also tells us that if we claim to be saved through faith in Christ, but do not exhibit any of the godly works that He expects that relationship to produce, we must question whether we have really placed saving faith in Christ, or not. What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Jas 2:14,17

How does your faith add up according to that spiritual check list?

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<sup>11</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Galatians*. Life application Bible commentary, Page 85. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

#### 4) Paul gives them an Old Testament example of justification through faith alone, (6, 7)

<sup>6</sup> **just as** (in the same way as), **Abraham** (the father of our nation Israel), “**believed God** (believed in the Person of God and thus the work and promises of God<sup>12</sup> [Gen. 15:6]—at least 14 years before he was circumcised [Gen. 16:16; 17:1]), **and it** (Abraham’s faith in God),<sup>13</sup> **was accounted to him for righteousness** (Abraham’s faith was the means by which he was acquitted of his sin and received right standing with God).”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> **Therefore** (knowing that Abraham’s justification before God came by faith alone), **know** (with certainty), **that only** (exclusively, without exception), **those who** (follow Abraham’s example, who), **are of faith** (and not of works—including circumcision), **are** (genuine spiritual), **sons of Abraham**, (become descendents of the same heritage that Abraham enjoyed by following his footsteps in receiving justification by faith alone).

#### 5) Paul illustrates through the Old Testament Scriptures that God Himself intended that justification come through faith alone, (8)

<sup>8</sup> **And** (furthermore), **the Scripture** (God’s written Word), **foreseeing** (knowing), **that God would justify** (acquit), **the** (uncircumcised), **Gentiles** (of their sin), **by faith** (alone and not by works), **preached the gospel** (the good news), **to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you** (through whom the Deliverer shall come), **all the nations** (Jews and Gentiles alike), **shall be blessed**, (shall benefit as they exercise saving faith in Him).”<sup>15</sup>

#### 6) Paul states in no uncertain terms, those who are genuinely justified, (9)

<sup>9</sup> **So then** (in light of everything I have said), **those who are of faith** (alone, totally absent of any works—whether circumcised or not), **are blessed** (being justified along), **with believing Abraham**, (whose example we follow by exercising faith alone).

<sup>12</sup> You cannot believe in the work or promises of a person if you don’t first believe in the person.

<sup>13</sup> Faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. (Ro 4:9) In Genesis 15:6, we are told that Abraham, “believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” (Ge 15:6)

<sup>14</sup> Circumcision was similar to believer’s baptism in the sense that baptism and circumcision never saved anyone. They are simply external and physical evidences of a professed inward faith. Just as some today make baptism at least a part of the means of ones salvation, the Judaizers were making circumcision at least a part of the means of ones salvation, too.

<sup>15</sup> Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? Both, for “all nations” are blessed through Abraham.

F APPLICATION:

**THE OBJECT OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH** was not his ancestry, his character, his morality, his circumcision, or some other faithful observance of Jewish rites. The object of Abraham's faith was God.

**THE ATTITUDE OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH** was not one of pride as a result of who he was or because of something he did. Abraham's attitude was one of humility because of his inability to do anything to earn or merit God's acceptance of him. If Abraham was going to ever be justified, it was going to have to be a work of God's grace and mercy.

**THE TIME OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH** was not when he obeyed God and was circumcised. It was prior to his circumcision. It was merely an identifying mark of his faith. It was merely one of the many good works that Abraham had been saved unto.

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH** was not that he was better than everyone else. It was that Abraham received a very special gift that he was unworthy of. He received the same spiritual standing as that of Christ. The righteousness of Christ was credited unto him.

**2. PAUL ADDRESSES THE LAW, (3:10-12)**

**1) Paul explains that those who look to obeying the law as their Messiah, only end up being cursed by it, (10)**

<sup>10</sup> (Only those who exercise saving faith in Christ alone, are truly justified), **For as many** (whether Jew or Gentile), **as are of** (i.e., rely upon, trust in), **the works of the law** (justification through human effort), **are under the curse** (they are always being shown that they are not good enough, that they are a failure, that they never measure up, that they are guilty of sin and in light of that, condemnation and death is awaiting them); **for it is written** (God has said), **"Cursed** (of God), **is everyone** (without exception), **who does not continue in all things** (flawlessly during their entire lifetime, obeying every regulation), **which are written in the book of the law, to do them**, (the law shows no mercy, its standard is never lowered, it forgives no weakness or slip, it offers no grace, it demands perfection, PERIOD!)."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 'Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' " (Dt 27:26) It was one thing for the Judaizers to quarrel with Paul's words, but it would be pretty hard for them to quarrel with God's in Deuteronomy 27:26.

## 2) Paul explains that those who look to faith in Christ as their Messiah, end up being blessed by Him, (11)

<sup>11</sup> **But** (what God’s Word declares and I am supporting is), **that no one** (without exception, Jew or Gentile), **is justified by the law** (self-effort), **in the sight** (or ruling), **of God, is evident** (it is obvious, it is dreadfully clear), **for** (“Thus sayeth the Lord”), **“the just** (those who are truly forgiven and declared righteous), **shall live by faith,”** (faith in God’s grace, not man’s works—faith in the value of Christ’s atoning work being applied to the sinners life—Another way to say this last phrase is, *“He who is just by faith shall live.”*)<sup>17</sup>

## 3) Paul explains that you have to choose one or the other because you can’t mingle faith and works, (12)

<sup>12</sup> **Yet** (seeing that it is faith that justifies), **the law** (which is works based, rejects faith and demands perfect obedience), **is not of faith** (which is Christ based, rejects works and offers grace and mercy), **but, “the man who does them** (who chooses to seek justification by works), **shall live** (or die), **by them,”** (you can’t have both, works and faith as they each reject the other—The law says, “Be perfect and live!” but grace says, “Ask for forgiveness and live!”)<sup>18</sup>

### 3. PAUL ADDRESSES GOD’S GRACE, (3:13-14)

#### 1) Christ died on the cross to provide for the believer’s redemption, (13)

<sup>13</sup> **Christ** (the object of the believer’s faith), **has redeemed us** (rescued us, delivered us, liberated us), **from the curse** (the transgression, shame, guilt and death), **of the law** (by), **having become a curse for us** (having taken the consequences of our sin upon Himself), **(for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)**,<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.” (Hab 2:4)

<sup>18</sup> You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord. (Lev 18:5)

<sup>19</sup> “If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God. (Dt 21:22-23)

In ancient Judaism a criminal who was executed, usually by stoning, was then tied to a post, a type of **tree**, where his body would hang until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God. It was not that a person became cursed by being hanged on a tree but that he was hanged on a tree because he was cursed. Jesus did not **become a curse** because He was crucified but was crucified because he was cursed in taking the full sin of the world upon Himself. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24; cf. Acts 5:30). (MacArthur, *Galatians*. Logos)

## F APPLICATION:

The word *redeemed* in Galatians 3:13 means to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free. It is possible to purchase a slave and keep him as a slave, but this is not what Christ did. By shedding His blood on the cross, He purchased us that we might be set free. The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians into slavery, but Christ died to set them free. Salvation is not exchanging one form of bondage for another. Salvation is being set free from the bondage of sin and the Law *into* the liberty of God's grace through Christ.

This raises an interesting question: how could these Judaizers ever convince the Galatian Christians that the way of Law was better than the way of grace? Why would any believer deliberately want to choose bondage instead of liberty? Perhaps part of the answer is found in the word *bewitched* that Paul uses in Galatians 3:1. The word means "[here], to fascinate." What is there about legalism that can so fascinate the Christian that he will turn from grace to Law?

For one thing, legalism appeals to the flesh. The flesh loves to be "religious"—to obey laws, to observe holy occasions, even to fast (see Gal. 4:10). Certainly there is nothing wrong with obedience, fasting, or solemn times of spiritual worship, *provided that the Holy Spirit does the motivating and the empowering*. The flesh loves to boast about its religious achievements—how many prayers were offered, or how many gifts were given (see Luke 18:9–14; Phil. 3:1–10).

Another characteristic of religious legalism that fascinates people is the appeal to the senses. Instead of worshiping God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), the legalist invents his own system that satisfies his senses. He cannot walk by faith; he has to walk by sight and hearing and tasting and smelling and feeling. To be sure, true Spirit-led worship does not deny the five senses. We see other believers; we sing and hear the hymns; we taste and feel the elements of the Lord's Supper. But these external things are but windows through which faith perceives the eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

The person who depends on religion can measure himself and compare himself with others. This is another fascination to legalism. But the true believer measures himself with Christ, not other Christians (Eph. 4:11ff). There is no room for pride in the spiritual walk of the Christian who lives by grace; but the legalist constantly boasts about his achievements and his converts (Gal. 6:13–14).

Yes, there is a fascination to the Law, but it is only bait that leads to a trap; and once the believer takes the bait, he finds himself in bondage. Far better to take God at His Word and rest on His grace. We were saved "by grace, through faith" and we must live "by grace, through

faith." This is the way to blessing. The other way is the way to bondage.<sup>20</sup>

## NOTES:

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<sup>20</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"—Jkt., Ga 3:6. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989.

## 2) The Holy Spirit indwells believers to provide for our sanctification, (14)

NOTES:

<sup>14</sup> (Jesus took our condemnation upon Himself, in order), **that the blessing of Abraham** (that all nations would be blessed through him, through whose blood line the Savior would come), **might come upon the Gentiles in** (by way of, made possible by, not the law, but), **Christ Jesus, that** (in order that), **we might** (as well), **receive the promise of the Spirit** (the sealing and enabling of the Holy Spirit), **through faith**, (in Jesus Christ).<sup>21</sup>

## 4. PAUL ADDRESSES THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S GRACE OVER THE LAW, (15-18)

### 1) The intent of God's covenant of grace cannot be ignored or changed, (15)

<sup>15</sup> **Brethren** (fellow Galatian believers), **I speak in the manner** (or the ways), **of men** (according to our human affairs): **Though it** (a binding agreement), **is only a man's covenant** (in contrast to God's covenant to Abraham), **yet if it is confirmed** (signed, ratified), **no one annuls or adds to it**, (no one can ignore it, or add anything to it—One cannot get out from under or change the terms of the agreement—even though it is a covenant made by man.).

### 2) The heir of God's covenant of grace cannot be overlooked or deprived, (16)

<sup>16</sup> **Now** (as you know), **to Abraham and his Seed** (Christ, God the Son, who would come through Abraham's blood line), **were the promises** (of justification [Gen. 15:8-18]), **made. He** (God the Father), **does not say, "And to seeds"** (decedents), **as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed"** (Descendent), **who is Christ**, (the object of the believer's faith).

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<sup>21</sup> And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Ac 1:4-5, 8)

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Eph 1:13)

**3) The timing of God's covenant of grace cannot be denied or disregarded, (17)**

<sup>17</sup> **And this I say** (what I am trying to get across to you through this illustration is), **that the law** (of Moses), **which was** (established), **four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul** (cannot override, cancel or void), **the covenant that was confirmed before** (430 years earlier with Abraham), **by God in Christ, that it** (the Law), **should make the promise** (of justification through Christ by faith alone), **of no effect**, (ineffective.—If men have no choice but to keep the agreements that they ratify between one another, certainly it would be impossible to change an unconditional covenant ratified by God the Father, alone! Especially when it had been ratified 430 years before the law was established.)

**4) The truth of God's covenant of grace cannot be misinterpreted or concealed, (18)**

<sup>18</sup> **For** (the reason being), **if the inheritance** (promised to Abraham—[an inheritance being something you don't earn, but freely receive]), **is of the law** (is based on our works, our performance), **it is no longer of promise** (something to be freely received, but in stark contrast something to be earned); **but** (the undeniable and amazing fact of the matter is), **God gave it** (lit., "*God has bestowed grace*"), **to Abraham by** (His unconditional), **promise**, (centuries before the Law of Moses ever came to be—Again, the Law was to point man to the promise of Abraham, not replace it [Rom. 3:20]).

**4. PAUL ADDRESSES THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S LAW IN LIGHT OF GRACE, (19-25)**

**1) The law was added, (19a)**

<sup>19</sup> (If the Law cannot justify a person), **What purpose then does the law serve?** (Is the obvious and only valid question we are left with.) **It was added** (later), **because of transgressions** (against God, to underline them and to show the extent of them. It was to complement the promise of grace, not replace or become a part of it.)

**2) The law was temporary, (19b)**

(the law was added, but only temporally), **till** (until), **the Seed** (until the descendent of Abraham, Jesus Christ), **should come to whom the promise was made** (or to whom the promise pertains [v. 16]);

### 3) The law was inferior to the Abrahamic Covenant, (19c)

**and it** (the law), **was appointed** (not by God personally, as the covenant with Abraham was, but), **through angels by the hand of a** (human), **mediator**, (moderating between God and the people, Moses).<sup>22</sup>

### 4) The Abrahamic Covenant is superior to the law, (20)

<sup>20</sup> **Now a mediator** (a representative who stands between two parties), **does not mediate for one only** (i.e., if there are not two parties to be represented [which with the law there are], a mediator is obviously not needed), **but God is one**, (concerning the issue of the unconditional covenant with Abraham—everything stands or falls upon God—God is totally responsible for its fulfillment).<sup>23</sup>

### 5) The law cannot give life, (21)

<sup>21</sup> (If the difference between law [*justification by self-effort*], and grace [*justification by faith*], is so huge), **Is the law then against** (or contrary to, or in competition with), **the promises of God**, (of justification through faith in Christ alone)? **Certainly not! For** (the

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<sup>22</sup> God was the Author and Giver of the covenant of law, and He was present with Moses on Mt. Sinai when it was given (Ex. 19:18–24) But in a way not fully explained, the law was given by God to Moses **through angels** (cf. Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2). MacArthur, John. *Galatians, Logos*.

...They killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. (Ac 7:52b-54)

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, (Heb 2:1-3).

<sup>23</sup> Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him...And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— (Ge 15:12, 17-18).

reason being), **if there had been a law given which could have given** (eternal), **life** (if there was a feasible chance that the law could justify fallen man), **truly righteousness would have been by the law**, (It would also then be in competition with faith in Christ).

### NOTES:

## 6) The law can only reveal and condemn sinners, (22a)

<sup>22</sup> **But** (to the contrary), **the Scripture** (God in His Word as it pertains to the law), **has confined** (imprisoned), **all** (Jews and Gentiles), **under sin** (the entire world was held prisoner in subjection to the power, guilt and divine judgment of sin)

## 7) The law can only present the need for justification; it cannot provide it, (22b)

**that the promise** (given to Abraham concerning justification), **by faith in Jesus Christ** (alone), **might be given to those who believe**, (not work—given to those who stop trying to earn, merit or deserve their justification through their own efforts, and place saving faith in Christ alone).

## 8) The law held us in bondage, (23)

<sup>23</sup> **But before** (the object of our), **faith came** (before the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ—while the promise was yet a prophecy), **we** (Jews specifically, but Gentiles in a real sense as well [Rom. 1:18-21]<sup>24</sup>), **were kept under guard** (in custody, imprisoned, in bondage), **by the law** (our jail-keeper, as it constantly convicted us of our sinfulness and helplessness to do anything about it), **kept** (enclosing us, like fish taken in a net, waiting), **for the faith which would afterward be revealed**, (waiting for our only hope of getting out of this mess, a Savior to come and set us free).<sup>25</sup>

## F APPLICATION:

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<sup>24</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Ro 1:18-21)

<sup>25</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Tit 2:13-14)

The law was the Clint Eastwood of the day in the sense of walking around with a loaded 44 magnum saying, “Go ahead and make my day.” The law was the guy walking around with the baseball bat clubbing you every time you stepped out of line. All it did was knock you down without mercy. That was its purpose. It was in effect saying, “If you don’t like getting battered, you need to go to the Promise, Jesus Christ, and get out from under my law and get under His grace.” It was the only escape from the prison Paul describes above.

## NOTES:

Rabbi Shammai, in the third century of the present era, noted that Moses gave us 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands in the law. David in Psalm 15 reduced them to eleven; Isaiah 33:14-15 made them six; Micah 6:8 binds them into three; and Habakkuk 2:4 reduces them all to one, namely, "The just shall live by faith."

**A man lived in another country whose laws were such that one could not walk on the sidewalks after 6:00 p.m. Eventually this man moved to the United States. After arriving here he decided to see the sights and so went for a long walk. Suddenly he realized it was getting close to 6:00 p.m. and he was far from where he was staying. In desperation, he stopped a stranger who was getting into his car and in halting English said, "Please, sir, help me! It is almost six and I am too far from my hotel to walk back before I will be arrested. Can you give me a ride?"**

**The stranger at first was confused but then realized that the man was new to the United States and so said to him, "Sir, let me assure you that in the United States we do not arrest people for being out after six."**

**This man knew he was in the United States, but he had not cast off his obedience to the laws of his old country and so was still being controlled by what no longer had any jurisdiction over him. He was a free man, needlessly bound to the rules and regulations of his former life.**

The Galilean believers were seriously considering placing themselves under the control of the law again, which really had no jurisdiction over them. Paul was trying to warn them of the tragedy of doing so.

Not all of the Judaizers were malicious in their desire to combine law with grace. They did not understand. Many of them were genuine and

sincere just like Paul was before his conversion. They were just sincerely wrong. Paul was trying to expose their error.

Sometimes the most difficult person in the world to get to see his or her need for salvation in Christ alone, by faith is the morally good person. Their life is built around good works, their laws of morality.

### **9) The law treated us like little children, (24a)**

<sup>24</sup> **Therefore** (the law is not against the promise because it directs us to it), **the law was our tutor** (teaching us as little children about our depravity, its consequences and our helplessness to personally overcome it.)

### **(1) Teaching us about the object of grace, (24b)**

**to bring us to Christ** (our only hope, to ask for the redeeming value of His life and death to be applied to our life, as there is no redeeming value in ours),

### **NOTES:**

<sup>25</sup> **But after** (Christ, the object of our), **faith has come** (which is the case now), **we are no longer under a tutor**, (little children under the dispensation of the law—Christ is not added to the law, Christ fulfills the law and causes it to become obsolete—believers are then under the dispensation of grace).

## 5. PAUL ADDRESSES THE POSITION GRACE PLACES US IN, (26-29)

### 1) The position of adulthood, (26)

<sup>26</sup> **For** (the reason being), **you** (those of you who have placed saving faith in Christ alone for your justification), **are all** (Jews and Gentiles), **sons** (not little children of the law, but adult sons), **of God** (the Father, no longer His enemy and the sons of the devil),<sup>27</sup> **through** (the means

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<sup>27</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Ro 5:9-11)

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph 2:1-3)

### (2) Teaching us about the means of grace, (24c-25)

**that we might be justified** (acquitted of the sin the law exposed within us, and declared righteous), **by faith**, (alone).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Ro 8:1-4 (The Judaizers were attempting to walk according to the flesh and NOT by faith.)

of saving), **faith** (alone), **in Christ Jesus**. (faith in Jesus Christ takes us out of the devil's family and slavery, and places us in God's family as an adult son with full privileges, [cp. Jn. 1:12]).<sup>28</sup>

### NOTES:

## 2) The position of Identity, (27a)

<sup>27</sup> **For as many of you as** (placed saving faith in Christ alone for salvation), **were baptized** (by the Holy Spirit), **into Christ** (spiritually immersed into Christ, thus being positioned in Him),<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> To be immersed into Christ is:

- to die with Him, (Rom. 6:2; Col. 2:20)
- to be buried with Him, (Rom. 6:4)
- to be made alive with Him, (Eph. 2:5)
- to be raised from the dead with Him, (Rom. 6:4)
- to be seated in heaven with Him, (Eph. 2:6)
- to be blessed with all spiritual blessing with Him, (Eph. 1:3).
- And to live life now through Him; to allow Him to display Himself through me, (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20).

In this way we are positioned with Christ. We have died to sin and ourselves and are thus positioned for Christ to have free reign to fulfill His will in and through us. It's as if the Holy Spirit took you back in time and nailed your old man to the cross and placed your soul and spirit into Christ. You now become the Christ people see here on earth, today. They see Christ as

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<sup>28</sup> The ancient Romans had a coming-of-age ceremony called *toga virilis*, which was somewhat like the Jewish bar mitzvah. The ceremony signified a boy's reaching the age of manhood (which varied between the ages of 14 and 17) and full Roman citizenship, with all its rights and privileges. He no longer had a [tutor] *paidagogos*, but was now a recognized adult, responsible for his own welfare and actions.

"You have all experienced a spiritual *toga virilis*," Paul told the Galatian believers, in effect, "and in light of that stupendous truth, why would you consider going back under the tutorship of the law?" MacArthur, *Galatians*. Logos Gal. 3:26.

### 3) The position of standing, (27b)

**have** (as a result), **put on Christ**, (clothed ourselves in spiritual union with the character and standing of Christ—as well as being united with other believers, becoming not only an adult member of God the Father’s family, but a member of the universal church as well, of which Christ is the head).<sup>30</sup>

### 4) The position of equality, (28)

<sup>28</sup> (Because gospel believers are in Christ), **There is neither Jew nor Greek** (no national distinctions or superiority), **there is neither slave nor free** (no social distinctions or superiority), **there is neither male nor female** (no gender distinctions or superiority); **for you are all one** (and the same), **in Christ Jesus**, (in that each has the same enabling, standing and privileges).

#### NOTES:

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you allow His life and will to flow through your new man! This helps us to understand why God said, “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” (1 Pet. 1:16), meaning, be who you are, who I have made you, like My Son.

Just because this baptism is spiritual and you can’t see it or feel it, doesn’t mean that it is not real. It’s like the union that takes place when God joins a man and a woman in marriage making them one. You don’t see it nor do you feel it because it is spiritual, but still very real.

<sup>30</sup> To put on Christ is to put on His character and standing, because having died with Christ, we no longer have any of our own. Our old man was nailed to the cross and left there. The new man we have to live through now is through our union with Christ. Also, when we stand before the Father at judgment day, Christ is who the Father sees, not us. It is not the law that justifies, it is Christ!

### 5) The position of blessing, (29)

<sup>29</sup> **And if** (conditional clause), **you are Christ’s** (if you have been baptized into Christ and have thus put on Christ, through faith alone in Christ), **then** (since Christ is of Abraham’s seed [3:16]), **you** (too), **are Abraham’s seed, and heirs** (partakers with Abraham), **according to the promise**, (to be justified by faith).

John Stott lucidly summarizes his comments

on this passage in the following words: "We cannot come to Christ to be justified until we have first been to Moses to be condemned. But once we have gone to Moses, and acknowledged our sin, guilt and condemnation, we must not stay there. We must let Moses send us to Christ" (*The Message of Galatians* [London: Inter-Varsity, 1968], p. 102).<sup>31</sup>

Because of his trust by many Arab tribes, the famous British scholar and soldier Lawrence of Arabia participated in the Paris peace talks after World War I. Several Arab leaders came with him to Paris and stayed in the same hotel. When they went into their bathrooms they were astounded to discover they could bring seemingly unlimited amounts of water into the bathtub or sink simply by turning the handle on a faucet. When preparing to leave Paris, they removed the faucets and packed them in their luggage, thinking that the faucets themselves magically created the vast amounts of water. When they told Lawrence what they had done, he explained that the faucets were useless unless connected to pipes that were, in turn, connected to a source of water.

In the same way, a person who is not connected to the Son is not connected to the Father and has no source of spiritual life or power. God has no **sons** who are not identified by **faith** with His only Son, **Christ Jesus**. No one comes to the Father except through His Son (John 14:6).<sup>32</sup>

Do you see why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and clothed with the armor of God now? Even though we have this new position, we still have free will, as did our Savior. We must walk circumspectly, redeeming the times, for the days are evil.

### NOTES:

 INTERPRETATION:

**F** APPLICATION:

 COMMENTARY:

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<sup>31</sup>MacArthur, John. *Galatians*. Logos.

<sup>32</sup>MacArthur, John. *Galatians*. Logos.

