

**Title:** Paul's Theological Defense: The Grace of God is Enough

**Text:** Galatians 3:1-5

**Theme:** The doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the foundation for all that we are and have in Him.

**Introduction:** In his theological defense of the gospel of grace he sets forth the idea that justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He opens up his next paragraph by asking five rhetorical questions. Each answer is obvious.

If Paul is following the pattern in this letter for a formal speech, then this section (chapters 3 and 4) is the most decisive of all because in it the 'proofs' are presented. This part determines whether or not the speech as a whole will succeed." (Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 128).

**The idea of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone permeates the entirety of the Christian life.** No part is excluded. **The point of the questioning is to show the utter folly of going back to works for any part of the Christian life.** We have a tendency to place justification as that which begins the Christian life and to our discredit we leave it there. **We treat it as if it has no bearing on the rest of what we are now going to encounter.** The doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the foundation for all that we are and have in Him.

"Any thought that the ongoing Christian life consists of doing things for God is Galatianism – the error in the early Church that made Paul angrier than any other, including the incest at Corinth . . . In [its] understanding of sanctification, present-day Dispensationalism has made statements that open it to the charge of being a modern form of the Galatian heresy . . . the Ryrie Study Bible says, 'Salvation is a free gift, but rewards, for those who are saved, are earned.' . . . Paul would be as angry with modern dispensationalism (and covenant theology [!]) as he was with the Galatian churches, who were at fault for wanting to add works to their faith. . . Calvin is guilty of the Galatian heresy." ([emphasis added] Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum*, 115-117 [chapter 4]).

### **THE BIG PICTURE:**

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/Application

### **Its Eternal Value:**

"Being a Christian starts and continues as a matter of faith. The Jewish law has nothing to say to it." (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 30).

**The Problem:**

“Paul was reminding the Galatian believers that the Christian life begins by the power of the Holy Spirit through faith, and it must continue that way. They could not reach spiritual maturity by human efforts apart from the Spirit's power. I think most Christians today would agree with that principle, yet **we are facing a new form of Galatianism: an attempt to be sanctified by works apart from God's Spirit. We can't sanctify ourselves any more than we can save ourselves. Only God saves and sanctifies by His Spirit through faith. Sanctification apart from the Holy Spirit is no sanctification at all. False sanctification is a serious problem but the solution is simple: we must depend on the Holy Spirit for sanctification just as we depended on Him for salvation.**”

(emphasis added) Whatever Happened to the Holy Spirit? The Ministries of the Holy Spirit -- Part 1 by John MacArthur All Rights Reserved (A copy of this message on cassette tape may be obtained by calling 1-800-55-GRACE) Galatians 3:1-5 Tape GC 90-31

This abandoning of our Lord's sufficiency is a falling from grace. This desertion language is used by Paul throughout the letter.

Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that **you are so quickly deserting Him** who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Galatians 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how is it that you turn back again** to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Galatians 5:7 You were running well; **who hindered you from obeying the truth?** 8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

To see the Christian life as anything but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is an abandoning of Christ. It is to fall from grace.

This same language is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:1-4.

1 I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; **for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.** 3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, **your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.** 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus [i.e., another gospel] whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

There is a real and constant threat that we abandon grace for works and in so doing stray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

**The Storyline:**

Paul stresses four different areas and he changes the contrast though he is using them as parallel statements.

<b>Verse 2</b>	<b>Works of the Law</b>	<b>Hearing with faith</b>
<b>Verse 3</b>	<b>By the flesh</b>	<b>By the Spirit</b>
<b>Verse 5</b>	<b>Works of the Law</b>	<b>Hearing with faith</b>

We are not to get stuck here. The contrast is a justification that is either by the works of the Law or by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is either one or the other, but not both or a mixture of both. The thought preceding this paragraph (2:15-21) is that our justification and its resultant sanctification is Christ-focused and grace-based. To drive his point home he asks a series of questions.

**Questions:**

1. Remember Galatians 1:7? How does Paul describe those who embrace a different gospel?
2. What language does he now use to describe those who embrace a twisted gospel?
3. Is what Christ accomplished hidden from view?
4. What area is Paul contrasting in verse 2?
5. What two things are contrasted throughout the following verses?
6. What connection does 3:1-5 have with 2:15-21?
7. Had the believers in Galatia suffered for their faith?
8. What conclusion does Paul come to in verse 5?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know God has finished the work and provided for you everything you will ever need.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose His way and let go of yours.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His finished work.

**Outline:**

“Their quest for perfection through the law is a drugged illusion from which they must be wakened. But how? How is the spell to be broken? Paul's methods are instructive. He pierces the fog of confusion in the Galatian churches with the searchlight of questions. Paul presses hard with questions to put the Galatians back in touch with their own experience of God. Questions come before dogmatic statements and authoritative commands. Questions are the way to start breaking the grip of illusions.”

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/?action=getCommentaryText&cid=7&source=1&seq=1.55.3.2>

There are four questions we will work through in our attempt to capture Paul's thoughts.

I. Why have you stopped following Christ (v. 1)?

A. Believers are senseless for going back to a position of bondage (v. 1).

Charles Blondin (1824-1897) owed his celebrity and fortune to his idea of crossing the gorge below Niagara Falls on a tightrope, 1100 feet long, 160 feet above the water. This he accomplished, first on June 30, 1859, a number of times, always with different theatric variations: blindfold, in a sack, trundling a wheelbarrow, on stilts, carrying a man (his manager, Harry Colcord) on his back, sitting down midway while he cooked and ate an omelet. Let us suppose, halfway across, his manager had said to Blondin: “Look here, this is all very well, but I really don’t trust you any more. I think I’d better do the rest by myself. Let me down and I’ll walk from here without you.” Unfortunately, this is what the false teachers taught and the Galatian believers were embracing.

Paul calls the Galatian believer’s foolish. It is the same word he will use in verse 3. The word is **anoatos**. It means, “To be senseless, to not perceive or understand.” (Vine’s)

“These words are obviously expressive of deep and powerful emotion, profound sorrow, strong displeasure; but the degree of feeling will not appear excessive when we have attended to the circumstances which called it forth.” (John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians*, 104).

B. Believers are seduced for going back to a position of bondage (v. 1).

The word “bewitched” is **baskaino**. It is used only here in the New Testament. The idea behind the word is to come under the spell of another by their unfavorable disposition (i.e. “the evil eye”) or by feigned praise. The Galatians had yielded to the opinion of man. They had fallen under the charm of the Judaizers.

Paul’s language is in keeping with 1:10 and 2:4. To leave Christ, grace and freedom for man, Law and bondage is foolish. In fact, Paul is convinced that no one in their right mind would do so. You would have to be under a spell to do so.

“Something ‘irrational’ must have happened to them, or else one cannot explain why they so quickly abandon the original kerygma in which they had believed thus far (cf. 1:6-7; 5:7-1-).” (Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 132).

The Galatian believers were turning away from the truth. What truth was being abandoned? They were abandoning the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is the truth that had been made clear to them (“publicly portrayed as crucified”).

“His use of the term *portrayed* means that his preaching was like painting a picture with

words or putting up a public poster for all to see. The perfect tense of the verb *crucified* indicates that Paul's vivid portrayal of Christ crucified was not only of the historical event but also of the present, saving power of the cross of Christ for all who believe in him." <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/?action=getCommentaryText&cid=7&source=1&seq=i.55.3.2>

Paul's language focuses on "Christ crucified." This statement is expressive of the whole doctrine of the gospel respecting the person and work of Jesus Christ. Their departure from the "gospel" is a desertion from, an abandonment of Christ. **What they once followed, they were now forsaking.**

1 Corinthians 1:23 but **we preach Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined to **know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**

## II. Are you saved by Law or by faith (v. 2)?

Paul's statement concerning the reception of the Holy Spirit is synonymous with new birth. There is a tinge of sarcasm in Paul's statement ("I want to find out from you"). Paul is saying to these people, "Let me become your student since you know so much why don't you teach me?" "Rather than presenting it himself, Paul wants to hear it from the Galatians. This experience is an undeniable fact and contradicts their present inclination to accept circumcision and Torah." (Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 132).

What exactly is meant by the statement, "Did you receive the Spirit by?" I have taken the liberty to look at this particular phrase as it is found in the New Testament. The occurrences are revealing (**Acts 1:8; 2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2, 6; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13**).

"Try to appreciate the force of Paul's argument which is so often repeated in the Book of Acts. That Book was written for the express purpose of verifying Paul's assertion, that the Holy Ghost comes upon men, not in response to the preaching of the Law, but in response to the preaching of the Gospel." (Luther, *Galatians*, Galatians 3:2)

The point in looking at these verses is not to discuss the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it is to point out how in none of these passage is there the slightest hint of "the works of the Law." All of it is "by hearing with faith." Paul's point is clear. You have begun the Christian life by faith not works.

Paul references the idea of hearing by faith in Romans 10:17.

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Paul's argument up to this point is a contrast between the works of the Law and faith in Christ.

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows:

He will identify believers in Galatians 6:1 as “the spiritual ones” (**hoi pneumatikoi**). Such a title is possible because of their relationship to the Holy Spirit. The discussion between the “works of the flesh” and the “fruit of the Spirit” explain Paul’s understanding of all believers being **hoi pneumatikoi**.

There is a natural progression in Paul’s questioning.

III. Are you sanctified by the Spirit or by the flesh (v. 3).

“Paul repeats his biting attack upon the readers by asking again ‘are you so foolish?’” (Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 133).

“There is keen irony in this thrust.” (A.T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

Again we have the second occurrence of the word “foolish” in the book of Galatians. Notice the progression of thought. The assumption of verse two is that we received the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith. The works of the Law was powerless to help me. If this is true, then why would I go back to the Law for my sanctification?

“The words he uses are the normal Greek words for beginning and completing a sacrifice. The first one (**enarchesthai**) is the word for scattering the grains of barley on and around the victim which was the first act of a sacrifice; and the second one (**epiteleisthai**) is the word used for fully completing the ritual of any sacrifice. By using these two words Paul shows that he looks on the Christian life as a sacrifice to God.” (William Barclay, *Galatians*, 25).

The word “perfect” is **epiteleo**. It is the word **teleo** with a prefix. It simply means, “To bring to completion.” There is an interesting verse worthy of our attention at this point. Please turn to Philippians 1:6.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (**epiteleo**) it until the day of Jesus Christ:

It is a different word (**poieo**), but can you not hear it in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24?

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and **He also will bring it to pass.**

I believe this is the argument throughout the book of Hebrews. Note 7:19.

19 (**for the Law made nothing perfect**), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

What did I do to be saved? I believed God and what must I do to be sanctified? Believe God. If believing is doing, then believe. What am I believing for my sanctification, that the entirety of my Christian experience is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It almost sounds too simple. Yet our sanctification is just like our salvation.

The difficulty we are having is in the term “sanctified.” What exactly does it mean? Sanctification is the process whereby the person of Christ is being revealed through me to those around me to a greater degree day-by-day. All the activities we call “disciplines” (i.e. Bible study, prayer, witnessing, meditation, memorization and the such like) are simply **expression of or consequences not causes of the process we call progressive sanctification.** It is a hard truth to lay hold of but, “I am as holy now as I was the day I got saved or will ever be.” The only difference is its expression or visibility.

IV. Are you suffering because of your embracing of the Law or of grace (v. 4).

Is what you are suffering now a result of embracing the works of the Law or because of embracing justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? The answer is apparent. They were being “harassed” by the Judaizers because they left the Law.

Look at this parallel idea in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8.

1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4 For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.

Think of what Paul is saying and compare it with the parable of the soils in Mark 4, especially note verses 16 and 17.

Mark 4:16 "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, **when affliction or persecution arises because of the word**, immediately they fall away.

I believe our difficulty is in trying to be definitive or absolute when there is a basic principle of perseverance noted. The issue is not recanting, but in non-repentance if one should recant.

Historically the church has struggled with those who would recant under torture. Once they recovered they would repent of their forced confession but those who did not recant would be reluctant to receive them back into the church. The issue is not recanting under duress, but what the response was after recanting.

V. Are you serving through the power of the Law or faith (v. 5).

We have been given the Spirit by God through means of grace not Law. The word "provide" is **epichorageo**. It means, "To fully furnish or supply." "When patriotic citizens gave free contributions to the state during times of war it was called **choregia**. The word is common in marriage contracts and describes the support that a husband, out of his love, undertakes to give his wife. **Choregia** underlines the generosity of God, a generosity which is born of love, of which the love of a citizen for his city and of a man for his wife are dim suggestions." (William Barclay, *Galatians*, 25).

Please notice the question being asked, "Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you?" God has provided us with the Holy Spirit. We are fully furnished with all that we need in Him to do what is "required" of us. In fact it is by means of His empowerment that miracles are being worked in our midst. He uses two power words, **energeo** and **duvamai**.

He uses **energeo** three times in Galatians (2:8; 3:5; 5:6). It is our English word, "energy." The NAS captures its meanings with the words, "effectually worked."

Galatians 2:8 (for He who **effectually worked** for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised **effectually worked** for me also to the Gentiles),

Galatians 5: 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith **working** through love.

The second word is **duvamai** It is used extensively throughout the New Testament to describe a miraculous, supernatural power. Let us walk through the book of Acts and note only the usage of **duvamai** (Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38; 19:11).

Ac 1:8 But ye shall receive **power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Ac 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by **miracles** and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (Notice the language of this verse. Does it not echo the thought of Galatians 3:5?)

Ac 3:12 ¶ And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own **power** or holiness we had made this man to walk? (It is grace that has the power to change lives in a concrete and tangible way. Do we believe this?)

Ac 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what **power**, or by what name, have ye done this?

Ac 4:33 And with great **power** gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Ac 6:8 And Stephen, full of **grace** and **power**, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Now let us compare it with Ephesians 3:20, 21.

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Now unto him that is able <**dunamai**> to do exceeding <**huper**> abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power <**dunamis**> that worketh <**energeo**> in us,

The power of the early church is still with us today. It is the Holy Spirit working in us and through us the life of Christ so that He might receive all the glory.

From our text (3:1-5) **Paul will now illustrate his point by introducing Abraham.** Everything Abraham enjoyed came in absence of Law. The blessing enjoyed by Abraham was through the hearing of faith. This we will consider in our next paragraph. Let us not forget what the false brethren were teaching. They said, “Jesus is necessary, simply not enough.” By their own admission they would be teaching a false gospel.

“Instead of this, they were seeking some other ground of confidence – some other method of salvation. As if his atonement had been either unnecessary or insufficient, they were endeavoring, in their circumcision and legal observances, to find something else on which they might rest their hopes of acceptance with God.” (John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians*, 106, 107).

“The answer is obvious because the Galatians were not ‘under the Torah’ at the beginning of their Christian life, nor are they law observers now.” (Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 136).

**Shepherding the Sheep:** (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Have you stopped trusting Christ for your Christian life?
2. Why have you turned back?
3. Maybe your fatigue in life and in ministry is a consequence of your self effort?
4. **Letting go and letting God** does not absent you from willing or your active participation, but it does let you know that it is **not dependent on you or about you.**
5. Maybe you need to let go of all you are trying to control and manipulate and rest in the control and care of God?
6. Jesus Christ awaits with open arms to welcome you back to a place of rest.

Let us declare to all that He is enough. He is more to me than my material possessions, He is more to me than my relationships, He is more to me than my money. He is to me my all and all.