

The General Electric Power Company Series

Galatians | Ephesians | Philippians | Colossians

Lesson #3 – Galatians 3

Main Idea

In last week's lesson we discussed the differences between *licentiousness* and *legalism*. The former seeks to gratify self, while the latter seeks to glorify self. In Galatians 3 Paul continues the theme of freedom in Christ; however, he specifically addresses issues relating to salvation by grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:8). At the very core of this issue is God's grace towards us. The default for every human is eternal separation from God, but for those of us who know God through Christ we have been rescued from this state of existence. Paul is clearly addressing with the Galatians warnings against returning to the works of the law. For you and me the principal application is this. As you and I seek to develop a greater understanding concerning God's grace towards us, the response on our part is a deeper level of commitment towards the things of God and to break down those strongholds that prevent us from becoming all that Christ has called us to be.

Outline for the Book of Galatians

Greetings & Introduction: Galatians 1:1-10

Part 1: Paul defends his apostolic ministry of the pure gospel. Galatians 1:11-2:21

Part 2: Paul defends the gospel of justification and salvation by grace and faith alone. Galatians 3:1-4:31

Part 3: Paul defends the freedom Christians have to love one another and live by the Spirit. Galatians 5:1-6:10

Concluding Remarks: Galatians 6:11-18

Questions for Consideration

1. The concepts contained within Galatians 3 served as the foundation of The Protestant Reformation. Even today, there is a great debate within the church regarding salvation. Admittedly, Scripture itself can be challenging to understand when not studied in the proper context. The primary focus in every salvation discussion should be that justification is completely a work of God (Romans 8:33 - *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies*). We add nothing to the work done by Christ on the Cross.
 - a. From your background, what were you taught about salvation? To answer this question, think back to around the age of 16 and consider how you would have answered if someone asked you if you were a Christian.
 - b. We have discussed the issue of salvation numerous times in this class. How do you address the issue of salvation and works using the Bible? In answering this question, consider the "stages" of salvation and how we grow in Christ (refer to the graphic below).



I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:14

- c. Read James 2:17, 20-24 and Galatians 3:4-14. Does there seem to be a contradiction in terms of the role of faith and works in salvation?
2. Why is it important that we understand the difference between *living under the Law* and *living under grace*?
 3. What motivates you to want to do the right things in life (i.e., what compels you to want to be obedient)? How important is it to understand the proper motivation as followers of Christ? Remember that freedom in Christ is not just a phrase; it represents words to live by and is at the very core of our Christianity.

Homework Read Galatians Chapter 4. How should recognizing that we are no longer slaves to sin (and the Law) impact the way that we live our lives?



Galatians 3 (New International Version, ©2010)

Faith or Works of the Law

¹ You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? ⁴ Have you experienced ⁵ so much in vain—if it really was in vain? ⁵ So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? ⁶ So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” ¹¹ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The Law and the Promise

¹⁵ Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

¹⁹ Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. ²⁰ A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

²¹ Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Children of God

²³ Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Footnotes:

- a. [Galatians 3:3](#) In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh (sarx)* refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.
- b. [Galatians 3:4](#) Or *suffered*
- c. [Galatians 3:6](#) Gen. 15:6
- d. [Galatians 3:8](#) Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18
- e. [Galatians 3:10](#) Deut. 27:26
- f. [Galatians 3:11](#) Hab. 2:4
- g. [Galatians 3:12](#) Lev. 18:5
- h. [Galatians 3:13](#) Deut. 21:23
- i. [Galatians 3:16](#) Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7
- j. [Galatians 3:23](#) Or *through the faithfulness of Jesus ... Before faith came*

