

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

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Thursday May 14, 2026

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 3:11 (NASB95) Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Chapter 3

Faith Brings Righteousness

Galatians 3:1–5 (NLT)

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. ² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³ How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? ⁴ Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? ⁵ I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

Galatians 3:1–5 (NASB95)

- 1** You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?
- 2** This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

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- 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
- 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?
- 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

POINT 1 - THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE WITH CHRIST

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (3:1)

You foolish Galatians reflects a combination of anger and love mixed with surprise. Paul was hardly able to believe what the **Galatians** had done. Like many believers before and after them, they had been victimized by Satan and induced to slip away from the truth by which they had been saved. Those believers were especially **foolish** because they had been so carefully and fully taught, having been on many occasions over the years privileged to sit under the teaching of Paul himself, whose very heartbeat was the gospel of God's grace.

Foolish does not mean mental deficiency but mental laziness and carelessness. The believers in Galatia were not stupid; they simply failed to use their spiritual intelligence when faced by the unscriptural, gospel-destroying teaching of the Judaizers. They were not using their heads.

Jesus used the word to rebuke the two disciples He encountered on the road to Emmaus: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (**Luke 24:25**). The disciples' basic problem was not mental but spiritual. Because they had not carefully studied to believe the prophets, they failed to understand that, as the Messiah, Jesus not only had to die but that He would be raised and return to His Father in heaven (see v. 26). Their understanding failed because their faith had failed.

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The **Galatians** were actually **bewitched** by the Judaizers. **Bewitched** means to charm or fascinate in a misleading way, as by flattery, false promises, or occultic power, and clearly suggests the use of feeling over fact, emotion over clear understanding of truth. “**Who** tickled your fancy?” Paul asked rhetorically, fully aware of the answer. “Who could have dragged you away from the solid foundation of truth in which you were once so well grounded?” The Galatians were not victims of a magical spell but were misled pupils of teachings they should have instantly recognized as false. They were willing victims who succumbed to the flesh-pleasing works righteousness of the Judaizers. They had been convinced that faith was not enough, that something was lacking that could be fulfilled by returning to the ceremonies and requirements of the Old Covenant.

The Galatians’ own experience of salvation should have prevented their falling for the Judaizing falsehood. First of all, they had experienced the powerful, transforming, mind-changing truth of the gospel in the crucified Christ. They were people **before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified**. They saw clearly the meaning of the cross. The gospel had come to them with the full clarity and power of Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf, and by faith they had believed and received it.

Paul’s preaching of **Jesus Christ** and the Galatians’ acceptance of Him by faith was all done **publicly**. The believers there were witnesses to each other’s salvation by faith in Him alone. But by turning to legalism they were denying the absolute saving power of Christ and the cross by which He had paid the penalty for their sins and bought their salvation.

Crucified translates a perfect passive participle, indicating that the crucifixion was a historical fact that had continuing results. John declares that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (**1 John 1:9**). A more literal translation is, “He is still righteous to keep on forgiving our sins.” No ritual, ceremony, regulation, or any other thing devised or accomplished by men can pick up where the cross leaves off—because the cross

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never leaves off. The cross is the continuing and eternal payment for all sin, and every sinner who puts his trust in the cross is forever and continually being forgiven. A believer can no more stay saved by works than he could have been saved by works in the first place. The cross keeps moving powerfully and relentlessly through history, and it will stand forever as living proof that men cannot redeem themselves.

Paul had proclaimed that justification is only by faith in Jesus Christ from the time he first set foot in Galatia. “And by him [Christ] all that believe are justified from all things,” he told his Jewish hearers in Antioch of Pisidia, “from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (**Acts 13:39, KJV**). That is essentially the message of the book of Hebrews, which was written primarily to Jewish believers, some of whom, like those in Galatia, were in danger of turning back to Judaism. “For, on the one hand,” the writer says, “there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (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.... Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant” (**Heb. 7:18–19, 22**).

Discussion Questions

- 1. What does Paul mean by “bewitched” in Galatians 3:1? Explain**
- 2. Who were the Judaizers?**
- 3. What is legalism in Christianity?**
- 4. What is the significance of Christ publicly portrayed as crucified?**

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POINT 2 - THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? (3:2–4)

Paul's next appeal was to the Galatian believers' experience with the Holy Spirit. "Don't you remember what **the Spirit** accomplished in your lives when you trusted in Christ for salvation?" he asks. He narrows his focus right to the issue when he pleads, "**This is the only thing I want to find out from you:** when you received Christ, **did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** Did you have to fulfill some further requirements, go through some special ceremony, or perform some additional rites? Or did you **receive the Spirit** by God's grace at the same time you received Christ as Lord and Savior?" The question was rhetorical and the answer obvious: They received the righteousness of Christ and His Holy Spirit at the same time.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the believer's most unmistakable evidence of God's favor, his greatest proof of salvation and the guarantee of eternal glory. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (**Rom. 8:16**), Paul assured the Roman Christians. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (**Rom. 8:9**). John writes, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (**1 John 4:13; cf. 3:24**).

It is therefore ludicrous to maintain, as some Christians do, that the full gift of the Holy Spirit comes through an additional work or experience. A person who does not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit does not need a second blessing; he needs salvation. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the new birth. At no time before salvation can a person *have* the indwelling **Spirit**, and at no time after salvation

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can he *not* have Him. “Having also believed” in Christ, Paul explained to the Ephesians, “you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance” **(Eph. 1:13–14)**. “Pledge” is originally referred to a down payment or earnest money given by a person intending to make a purchase, as a guarantee that the full amount would be paid. In modern Greek a form of the word is used for engagement ring. The Holy Spirit is the believer’s divine guarantee that, as part of Christ’s church, His bride, he will one day participate in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Peter had first witnessed Gentiles’ receiving the Holy Spirit when he preached to Cornelius and his relatives and friends at Joppa. “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also” **(Acts10:44–45)**.

Though not in so dramatic way, every true believer in Galatia had received the Holy Spirit the moment he received Jesus Christ as Savior. “Don’t you remember,” Paul asked, “that you received **the Spirit ... by hearing with faith?** How then, can you be duped by the Judaizers into thinking that He came to you, or will eventually come to you, **by works of the Law?**”

The Holy Spirit is not the goal of the Christian life but is its source. He is not the product of faithful living but is the power behind it. A higher level of living does not bring the Holy Spirit; rather submission to the Holy Spirit, who already indwells the believer, includes a higher level of living.

“**Having begun by the Spirit,**” Paul continues, “**are you now being perfected by the flesh?** How could you think that your weak, imperfect, still sinful **flesh** could improve on what the divine **Spirit** of God began in you when you first believed?” Drifting from the provisions of grace into the efforts of law is ludicrous.

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Even the best and most acceptable works do not increase our standing before God or elevate us to a higher spiritual status. How would it be possible to be more than a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ, who is the Heir of all things (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:2; cf. Gal. 4:7; 1 Pet. 3:7)?

Did you suffer so many things in vain? Paul asks next. **Suffer** that carries the basic idea of experience and sometimes that of pain or hardship. Since the context suggests nothing of suffering or hardship, it seems best to take the word here to refer to experience, the believers' personal experience with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. Paul is asking, “**Did you experience so many things in vain?** Did you learn nothing at all from them? Can't you think things through and see that the claims of the Judaizers cannot possibly square with the gospel you have been taught and have experienced yourselves?”

Paul softens the blow by adding, **If indeed it was in vain**, leaving open the possibility and hope that it was not. In other words, “I hope what I have heard about you is not true or that you have come back to your senses.” The apostle uses the same approach several other times in the letter, hitting hard at an error or failure and then softening his tone (see, e.g., 4:9–14, 20; 5:2–10).

POINT 3 - THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE FATHER

Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (3:5)

The third appeal to experience is with God the Father, **He ... who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you**. Just before His ascension Jesus commanded the disciples “not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which,’ He said, ‘you heard of from Me’ ” (**Acts 1:4**). Through the Son, the Father had promised to give “the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). And “when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,” Jesus explained on another occasion, “He will

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guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak” **(John 16:13)**.

Provides means to supply abundantly and with great generosity. 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.

In His superabundant generosity to His children, God **provides** them **with the Spirit and works miracles among** them. **Miracles** refers basically to power or ability passed down from God. Paul may have been referring to miraculous events God had worked **among** the Galatian believers, or he may have been referring to the spiritual power over Satan, sin, the world, the flesh, and human weakness that the Father bestows on His children through His **Spirit**. Paul’s preaching in Corinth was “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” **(1 Cor. 2:4)**. He even boasted in his own weaknesses in order that the power of Christ might dwell in him (2 Cor. 12:9). God, he says, “is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” **(Eph. 3:20)**. In each of those passages power refers to the Father’s divine gift to His children.

Paul’s argument is itself powerful: If a person has received eternal salvation through trust in the crucified Christ, received the fullness of the Holy Spirit the same moment he believed, and has the Father’s Spirit-endowed power working within him, what more could a person hope to achieve from his own insignificant human resources ?

Discussion Questions

1. How does faith relate to receiving the Holy Spirit? Explain

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2. What is the meaning of justification by faith? Explain
3. How can I know I have received the Holy Spirit ?
4. What is the role of the law in salvation?
5. What was most meaningful to you in this lesson?

Closing Prayer