

# Knowing Him

## Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

### Lesson 3 Galatians 3

Can you remember a time when you heard a message preached from the pulpit only to walk out the doors and not allow it to directly affect your personal life? Even worse is experiencing the opposite—applying the truth of Scripture to your daily life only to turn and exchange it for your old way of doing things. Incredible! But it can happen and such was the case with the believers in Galatia.

Paul had just concluded (2:15–21) reiterating the message he first preached at the beginning of this letter—the gospel of faith and freedom that comes from God's grace alone. Now he will seek to defend that truth by pointing to the reality of past experience in the Christian life.

**Read Galatians 3:1–29.**

**Foolish Galatians!**

#### *At a glance*

Paul's use of the word "foolish" refers not to a lack of intelligence but a lack of obedience. His message in these first five verses is very clear. Look them up in more than one translation to capture their intensity. What do you notice?

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The Phillips translation of verse 1 says: "O you dear idiots of Galatia . . . who has been casting a spell over you?" The passive meaning of the word *foolish* implies *unthinkable*; in the Greek sense it means *unreasonable*. Paul's accusation against them is that, having known the wonder and freedom of God's grace operating in their lives, they were allowing themselves to be deceived into giving up and laying down that freedom in exchange for the bondage of the law. They were doing what was unthinkable and unreasonable!

1. What vivid picture did Paul work hard to portray about the Lord? v. 1
2. What series of questions does Paul pose to press his point?
  - v. 2

- v. 3
- v. 4
- v. 5

Paul refers to the believers past experience (v. 4) in light of their present circumstances; meaning, if they had suffered so many things at the hands of the Jews, then why would they desire to return to the Jewish laws? He goes on to emphasize the point that they received the Holy Spirit—*not* when they obeyed the law—rather, when they believed!

3. What direct evidence did these believers have of the Spirit's presence among them? v. 5
4. In verses 6–9, who does Paul portray as the model believer?

Apparently, the Judaizers had used Abraham as their example of one who inherited God's blessing of righteousness to argue that every true follower of God needed to follow his example of circumcision.

- a. Paul counters their argument by saying that Abraham was justified by God, but on what basis?
- b. According to Paul, who qualifies to receive the same spiritual blessings?

**Memory Verse:** *"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."* Galatians 3:24

**Viewpoint** Learn to view your circumstances through the lens of God's truth rather than looking at God's truth through the eyes of your circumstances. Practice this with the *In focus* word search below and then with the *Up close & personal* look to follow.

**In focus:** Write a definition for the following words, using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.).

cursed (Galatians 3:13) \_\_\_\_\_

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promise (3:14) \_\_\_\_\_

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Up close & personal: Regarding *true believers*, Romans 4:3 says, “*Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” He believed God’s promise of salvation centuries before it was fulfilled on a Roman cross. What about you; do you take God at His word or are you more inclined to conclude that seeing is believing?

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**Galatians 3:10–18**                      The Changeless Promise

With a tone bordering on arrogance, Paul goes for the jugular—attacking the Judaizers where they were the strongest. Quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul turns the scripture on them: “*Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.*” Contrary to what the Judaizers espoused, the law itself cannot save anyone—it can only condemn.

1. To understand the Old Testament use of the word *curse*, read through Deuteronomy 27. Notice in verses 14–26 that 12 times the use of the word *cursed* is mentioned. Take a moment to list those who are cursed.

Paul’s argument is evident—for any and all who did not obey every law there was condemnation (a curse). If a person were to try to merit God’s favor by keeping the law, he/she would have to satisfy all that the law demanded, but no one could do that. The result of attempting to be right with the law in order to be right with God ends in a curse—not God’s curse but the law’s curse (vv. 10–12).

2. Who are the “justified” in God’s eyes? v. 11
3. In verse 13, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 21:23. What did Christ do to lay the foundation for our salvation?
4. The blessing Abraham received is the promise of the Spirit by faith that Paul mentions in verse 14. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit in the following?
  - a. Isaiah 32:15

- b. Ezekiel 37:14
- c. Luke 11:13
- d. Luke 24:49
- e. John 14:16–17
- f. John 14:26

To further explain the principles of law and grace, in verses 15–18 Paul turns to an example from Galatians' daily life—a contractual agreement. Once a contract is signed and confirmed by two parties it cannot be changed or annulled by anyone. That being true, how much more binding is God's promise to us? His covenant cannot be changed because He does not change. His word is true—He always keeps His promises!

5. To whom did God make the promise of salvation? v. 16

The Jews claimed to be the rightful heirs to God's promise because they were Abraham's offspring but Paul points out the fact that there is only one rightful heir—Jesus. It is through Christ that all believers by faith inherit the promise of salvation.

The Judaizers believed that because the law came after Abraham it was superior to grace (salvation by faith alone). Paul states that the giving of the law 430 years after God's promise of salvation by faith does not nullify the promise. The inheritance—justification by faith—is the gift of grace to all who believe. This gift of grace given through Abraham is permanent and unchangeable and superior to the law.

### **Galatians 3:19–29**

### **Kept For the Faith**

Paul will now reveal the purpose of the law, that it was always intended to make us aware of our sin and lead us to Christ.

Read vv. 19–29 for review.

1. Why was the law necessary? vv. 19–20

The word *transgression* in verse 19 means a stepping aside from the right track. The law made people aware that they were deviating off of the right path.

- a. The law was established as a temporary measure—until who came?  
See Matthew 5:17 for help.

A mediator is needed to work between two or more parties involved in a contract and the agreement is valid as long as both sides keep their part. God commissioned angels to mediate the law to Moses who then gave it to the people of Israel. God in turn kept His promise, but Israel did not keep hers.

According to Paul, does all this mean that the law is opposed to God’s promise? Paul answers, “*Absolutely not!*” (v. 21)—righteousness does not come by the law.

- 2. For whom was the promise intended? vv. 22–24
  - a. Before faith, the law did what? What was the law’s ultimate purpose?
- 3. What served to break the power of the law? v. 25
- 4. Challenge: Look carefully again at verses 25–29. List in your own words the things that every believer *is* and *has* because we belong to Christ.
  - Personal: Is there one aspect of your inheritance listed above that is of particular significance to you? Please explain.

**Be transparent**

Who doesn’t enjoy putting on a little something new? If you perhaps need a new *spiritual* wardrobe, take a look at verse 27 where Paul talks about “putting on Christ.” To be *in Christ* means to *clothe yourself* with Christ by putting on His nature, characteristics, attitude and behavior. Spend a little time meditating in Ephesians 4:20–24. How is your study in His Word helping you to *put on Christ*?

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# A Clear Perspective

*“ . . . It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me . . . ” Galatians 1:15-16a*

As God writes your story, use this page to let Him highlight and clarify what He revealed to *you* this week. Revisit the points that stood out to you and note your findings below.

1. As you studied God’s Word this week, how did your viewpoint change?

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2. What word of truth came into sharper focus for you?

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3. In what way have you grown closer to the Lord?

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4. What relevance is there between this week’s memory verse and your daily life?

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**Memory Verse:** Write out this week’s verse from memory.

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