

# Galatians in Review

Galatians (*Selected verses*) John 3:16-21

August 27, 2023  
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St. Paul was personally chosen by the resurrected Lord Jesus to be an Apostle. He is an *authentic Apostle* with the *genuine Gospel* of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Paul speaks with authority even today.** The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians, and we consider it *inspired and inherent*; it is part of the Holy Scriptures; it teaches us the truths of the Kingdom of God.

The book of Galatians was written because there were false teachers in the Galatia area of the Roman Empire<sup>1</sup> who were teaching that salvation is *by works* rather than *by faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were teaching a doctrine that was completely contrary to what the Apostle Paul had taught, and to what all of Scripture bear witness to. The book of Galatians was written to clearly teach how we are saved: that salvation is **NEVER** by anything that we do<sup>2</sup>, but by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in His Son Jesus Christ alone. *The key verse in the book of Galatians is this one:*

"We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16  
Notice that Paul emphasizes both salvation by faith and NO salvation by works three times in this one verse!!!

As we wrap up our summer series on the book of Galatians today, we want to make sure that we understand the main truth of this book.

**Salvation is by grace alone  
in Christ alone through faith alone;**

it is never by "works of the law," that is, something that you yourself do to make up for your own sins.

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<sup>1</sup> Today, this is the part of the country of Turkey. St. Paul planted Christian churches in this area during his missionary trips, recorded in the book of Acts. If you would like to read some of these stories, see Acts 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> The Biblical term for works righteousness is "works of the Law." In the New Testament era, the "work" was keeping the Laws of Moses in the Old Testament, including circumcision. Today, there are a plethora of various false doctrines teaching people that they must do something to be saved – that faith in Jesus is not enough. Faith and works are mutually exclusive in Scripture: they are complete opposites. It might be helpful for you to take the time and memorize Galatians 2:16 to keep this truth in front of you at all times.

The issue in the book of Galatians is this: are you saved because of some **work** that you do; or are you saved because of a **promise** that God has made? *Who's doing the work of your salvation – God or you?* It's either/or, it cannot be both/and. Works and faith are **MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE**; in terms of salvation, they are **EXACTLY OPPOSITE** each other.

The Bible teaches that **salvation is a promise** that God makes to you:

**God so loved the world that  
He gave His Only Begotten Son for you,  
that by believing in His Name you will not perish,  
but have eternal life.**

Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, your sins are forgiven, you have peace with God, and you have eternal life.

**That's the promise.**

*Now, what do you do with that promise?*

Some people reject that promise, and believe that they have to earn their own salvation by something good that they do. That's called works righteousness, and it is clearly condemned in Scripture. St. Paul even goes so far as to say that that kind of thinking is **CURSED BY GOD**. (Gal 3:10)

If you believe God's promise of salvation is by grace alone in Christ alone through faith alone, then that's the work of the Holy Spirit within you. *No one can say "Jesus is Lord" without the Holy Spirit.* (1 Cor 12:3)

How this works is that you hear the promise: **God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son for you, that by believing in His Name you will not perish, but have eternal life.** You hear that promise, that Gospel, and you know that it's true, and that you are included. The Holy Spirit works through that promise to create that **faith**. You **believe** the promise. You **trust** God's word. **THAT IS HOW YOU ARE SAVED.**

God wants people to trust Him, to believe His Word, to have faith in His Promises. The Lord **never** asks you to work for Him, He **never** tells you to earn your own salvation, He **never** teaches you to make up for your own sins! Salvation is by **faith** alone: by **trusting** God's promises in the Lord Jesus Christ; you **believe** His Word.

That is what the book of Galatians is all about. That is the primary reason why it was written. St. Paul is an *authentic Apostle* teaching us the *genuine Gospel* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today make sure that you are trusting in God's promises. Renounce any kind of works righteousness that you find in your heart, thinking, or attitude. Trust in Christ and His work for you. If you struggle with this, then let the Word of God strengthen you:

"We know that a person is **NOT** justified by the works of the law,  
but by faith in Jesus Christ.  
So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus  
that we may be justified by faith in Christ  
and **NOT** by the works of the law,  
because by the works of the law **NO ONE** will be justified.

Galatians 2:16

God's Word has the power to drive away doubt, and to strengthen your faith.

After St. Paul teaches us the Gospel truth of *salvation by faith alone in Christ alone*, he reminds the Galatians **AND US** that Christ has **set us free** from the Law, from sin, and all of its consequences. **You have a new life to live.** He describes that new life in various ways.

- ➡ You are filled with the Holy Spirit, and you walk in His ways.
- ➡ You bear the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. These are the things that guide your relationships with other people.
- ➡ In freedom, you love God and grow in faith
- ➡ In freedom you love your neighbor and do what you can to encourage, support, help, and care for them; all the while expecting NOTHING in return.
- ➡ The Christian life also means that you renounce the works of the flesh and you have nothing to do with them: things like sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. We know that if you make these things your lifestyle, **that you will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Your life of freedom in Christ is marked by love: love of God and love for your neighbor – never expecting anything in return from either.

**Finally one other thing** as we wrap up Galatians today. By the power of the Holy Spirit you know, understand, and believe in God's grace and the freedom you have in Christ. **BUT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT.** **Most people are living under the heavy burden of the Law, sin, guilt and shame. They are terrified of death, dying and the final judgment.** You can bring the Word of God's grace in Christ to the people in your life! You can speak the words of eternal life! You are a light of Christ that shines in this dark world.

**You can assume that most people in your life have NO IDEA about the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

- ➡ The **unbelievers** in your life are living under the terrible burden of guilt, shame, and the fear of death. They have no idea about the free gift of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ that sets them free from guilt, shame, and the fear of death. God can use your words of grace, your talking about Jesus and His work, **to set them free!** Let your words be full of grace; turn your conversations to Christ and His salvation. Let it be one of the topics that you talk about, along with the 100 other things you talk about<sup>3</sup>. The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to people.
- ➡ And it's not just the unbelievers in your life that you need to be aware of. **Most Christians are living under the burden of the law as well.** Most likely, they are being taught some form of works righteousness. They are being told that they have to do something to be acceptable to God: or to do *this or that* to be a “better Christian,” or that they need to do *this or that* to be “more holy,” or that they have to do *this or that* to “merit” salvation. **Most Christians are taught to look to themselves rather than Christ.** God can use your words of grace, your talking about Jesus and His work, **to set them free!** Let your words be full of grace; turn your conversations to Christ and His salvation. Let it be one of the topics that you talk about, along with the 100 other things you talk about. The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to people.

**The book of Galatians** brings into sharp focus the message of all of Scripture: God is our Savior, He saves us through His Son Jesus, and He gives it to you as a **free gift of grace**. You have been set free from the “works of the Law,” that is, any attempt to earn your own salvation.

You are free!

You are saved!

You are forgiven!

**It is all given to you as a free gift:  
by the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ!**

Amen!

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<sup>3</sup> Sharing your faith is intimidating. But the Spirit empowers you to overcome that. You are not expected to know all the answers nor have a doctorate in Theology. Simply talk about grace. Keep the focus on Jesus and His death and resurrection that brings forgiveness. There is no need (nor use) is arguing about various other things. Just share Jesus and His work – and let the Holy Spirit take it from there! Let people know that you pray for them; invite them to come to Church with you; bring them to a Bible study. Joyfully sharing your faith is part of the freedom that we have in Christ!

## **Galatians** *(selected verses)*

1:1-5, 11-12; 2:16, 19-21; 3:10-14; 5:1, 13-18, 6:18

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers and sisters with me, 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

16 [we] know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

19 “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

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.

5 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

### **John 3:16-21**

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

**God the Father,**  
**we praise and thank you for your**  
**grace in Your Son Jesus.**

**We thank you for the Apostle Paul**  
**and the book of Galatians**  
**that has taught us to abandon our**  
**own efforts and works**  
**and to look to You and Your grace**  
**alone for eternal salvation.**

**Send us the Holy Spirit so that we**  
**may not doubt, but firmly believe,**  
**that we are justified by faith**  
**in Christ**  
**and not by works of the law.**

**In Jesus' Name we pray, amen!**

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