

Galatians: Freedom through Christ – Part 5

What Happens When You Believe? – Galatians 3:1-14

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – October 12, 2025

Introduction

- If you have your Bible, please open up to Galatians (or page 1002 in the pew Bible), as we are going to look back into chapter 2, starting with verse 20, and then connect these verses to our passage today, which is Galatians 3:1-14.
- As a reminder, if you have been with us so far in this series, or if you are new today, to catch you up, in this letter to the church of Galatia, Paul is writing to clearly define, describe, and defend the gospel to a church that has been drawn away and deceived by false teaching into thinking that you must not only believe in Christ but also obey the Old Testament laws to be saved. This is Jesus “plus” thinking that attacks the church even today in various forms.
- Paul continues to pound the nail that God saves us by His grace, which was purchased for us through the death and resurrection of His righteous Son Jesus, who died in our place for our sins to redeem us from this present evil age. What Christ did on the cross was enough, and we are saved by His grace, and His grace only.
- In our passage for today, Paul continues to build his case through logic and Old Testament scriptures to explain what happens when we believe in Christ.

The purpose of this message is to give you a clear understanding of what happens when you believe the gospel and what that means for living the Christian life.

When You Believe, You Receive the Spirit of Christ

Galatians 2:20–3:6 (NIV)

“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!”

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 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.”

- What Paul is saying is that if we could earn or merit salvation on our own through obedience to the laws of God, then we would not need Jesus, He died for nothing, and we don’t need the grace of God because we could “earn” salvation on our own.
- The reality is that Christ was indeed crucified, and that reality points to the fact that we cannot earn salvation because God did not sacrifice His Son for no reason. Christ was perfect in His being and perfect in His doing, and He gave Himself for us because of His love for us, to take our place for the punishment due us for our sin and violation of God’s laws.

- When we believe in Christ, we are in Him as our sinful self is crucified in Christ, and He is in us through His Spirit, in which we live by faith in the Son of God.
- So, building upon this truth, Paul asks, “When did you receive the Spirit of Christ? Was it when you obeyed the law of God, or when you believed in the Son of God?” The clear answer is when they believed the gospel.
- ***God works within us and God works among us, not because of our obedience to the laws of God, but because of our belief in the Son of God.***
- When you believe in the gospel, you receive the Spirit of Christ. Not only is His Spirit a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Cor 1:22), but it also makes us “born again” (John 3:1-22) and begins the process of conforming us into the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29-30). When we believe, God works within us, which is a miracle.
- The second miracle is that God works among us, through various empowerments and gifts, and through the love and care we have for one another. All of this is given to us by grace because we believed the gospel.
- This is the same way it worked with Abraham. When he believed, it was credited to him as righteousness. He was made right with God, justified or “right-ified,” the moment he believed the promise of God, not because of anything that he did or could do. His actions demonstrated his faith, but it was his faith that made him right with God.
- This leads us to the next point: when you believe, you become a child of Abraham.

When You Believe, You Become a Child of Abraham

Galatians 3:7-9 (NIV)

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.

- Being a child of Abraham means that you are a part of the family of God, that you are a child of God and will be a part of the blessing given to Abraham. To fully understand this passage, you need to have an understanding of who Abraham was and what this blessing means.
- Abraham is a foundational figure in the Bible, mentioned nine times in the book of Galatians and 294 times in the Bible. His story is primarily found in the book of Genesis, chapters 12–25.
- In Genesis chapter 12, God gives Abraham (Abram) promises, which are called the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 12:2-3 (ESV)

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

- Abraham would become a great nation. He would be blessed, his name would be great, God would bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. The gospel of faith would come to the Gentiles as well. This is a big deal.
- However, Abraham had a problem; his wife, Sarah, was barren, and they were both old (when God first spoke to Abraham, he was seventy-five and Sarah was sixty-five). Years later, when

Abraham was in his eighties and Sarah in her seventies and they still did not have a child, God spoke to Abraham again and told him:

Genesis 15:4-6 (ESV)

Your very own son shall be your heir. 5 And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- Abraham’s belief in the promise and power of God was counted as righteousness. Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill God’s promise by their own power and strength (Ishmael). However, God fulfilled His promise in creating new life out of death. Abraham was one hundred and Sarah was ninety when they had Isaac, the child of the promise.
- Paul’s point and logic are that when you believe in Christ and His promise, that is when you become a part of the family of God, a child of Abraham. This cannot be done in our own effort. Also, those who are ethnically descendants of Abraham are not automatically in the family of God. Being born ethnically a Jew does not make you a “child of Abraham”; only through the faith of Abraham do you become a part of the family of God. Jesus argued this with the religious leaders as well. You become a child of God through faith and are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
- When you believe, you receive the Spirit of Christ, you become a child of Abraham, and you are redeemed from the curse of the law.

When You Believe, You Are Redeemed from the Curse of the Law

Galatians 3:10-14 (NIV)

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 “curse of the law” is that you have to do everything in it in order to receive the blessing from it, or to be considered righteous. No one can do this; it is impossible. This is where the good news comes in. Jesus fulfilled the law and then took the curse of the law on Himself when He was crucified on the cross so that we can be redeemed from the law and receive grace and not be bound to live under the Old Testament law, even though the moral law continues to today. There is still right and wrong.
- There are three types of law in the Old Testament:
 - *Moral Law* - Universal and timeless principles that reveal God's character and moral order that carry forward in the New Testament. For example, the Ten Commandments.
 - *Ceremonial Law* - Laws related to Israel's religious rituals, practices, purity, and worship. These do not carry forward in the New Testament. For example, regulations

concerning sacrifices, festivals, dietary restrictions, and priestly duties found in books like Leviticus.

- *Civil Law* - Laws that governed the social, judicial, and economic aspects of Israelite life as a nation do not carry forward in the New Testament. For example, laws concerning property rights, marriage, servants, personal injury, and the application of justice, found in texts like Exodus 21–23.
- We do not become redeemed or are justified by observing the law; Jesus took that curse for us. What we must do is believe that Jesus is the true promised son and that through Him comes the blessing to all nations. We are now to live to God through the power of Christ's Spirit living in us. We are in Him, and He is in us.

Conclusion

- When you believe in Christ, everything changes. You receive the Spirit of God living in you. You are adopted into the family of faith as a child of Abraham. And you are redeemed from the curse of the law because Christ took that curse upon Himself.
- Believing isn't just agreeing with facts about Jesus; it's entrusting your whole life to Him. It's laying down your efforts to earn God's favor and resting in what Christ has already accomplished on your behalf.
- It's like getting on an airplane for a trip. You don't have the ability to fly yourself there; you trust the plane and the pilot to do what you never could. The moment you step on board, you're "in." You've placed your confidence in something stronger, something capable of carrying you. You're not flying by your own power; you're being carried by another.
- Faith in Christ works the same way. When you place your trust in Him, you are united with Him, you are in Christ, and His Spirit is in you. You belong to His family and are freed from the exhausting burden of trying to earn righteousness on your own.
- And here's the good news: God already paid for your ticket. Grace means you can't earn your way to God. He came down to you. You don't do good things to be loved by God; you do good things *because* you are loved by God.
- Faith doesn't have to be flawless; it just has to be focused. It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to point to the One who is. God doesn't look at your résumé; He looks at your Redeemer. Your identity, your worth, your security are not built on your performance but on His promise.
- The same God who brought life out of Sarah's barren womb and raised Jesus from the dead can bring new life out of you. So stop trying to flap your wings in your own strength. Rest in the finished work of Christ and let the Spirit lead you.
- When you believe, you receive His Spirit, you belong to His family, and you are redeemed by His grace. That's the freedom of the gospel. That's what happens when you believe.
- If you'd like someone to pray with you today—maybe to take that step of faith, or to renew your trust in the Lord—our prayer team would love to pray with you. You'll find them near the **"Prayer"** sign at the front of the sanctuary, and also in the **prayer room** next to the offices. You can also send your requests anytime to prayer@crosspointrockford.com.
- Let's trust the One who gave Himself for us, who lives in us, and who carries us safely home.

Our prayer team is available to pray with you after the service, near the "prayer" sign at the front of the sanctuary, and also in the prayer room, located next to the offices.

Also, you can send your prayer request to prayer@crosspointrockford.com

Questions for Small Groups

1. **Faith and the Spirit** – According to Galatians 3:1-6, how did the Galatians receive the Holy Spirit, and how does this truth challenge the way people today often think about spiritual growth or holiness?
2. **Grace vs. Effort** – Paul rebukes the Galatians for trying to “finish by means of the flesh.” In what ways are we tempted to rely on our own performance after beginning by grace?
3. **The Example of Abraham** – What can Abraham’s story teach us about the difference between faith and self-effort? How do you see yourself in his journey of waiting and trusting God’s promises?
4. **The Curse of the Law** – What does it mean that Christ “became a curse for us”? How should this deepen our understanding of both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of grace?
5. **The Role of the Law Today** – How do the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws differ? Which aspects of God’s law continue to guide believers, and how can we live in obedience without falling into legalism?
6. **Living by Faith** – How can we practically “live by faith in the Son of God” in our daily routines at work, in relationships, or in times of struggle?
7. **Identity in Christ** – How would your life change if you truly believed that your worth, identity, and security come from Christ’s promise and not your performance?