"Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit,

are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

Galatians 3:3 NAS

Galatians 3:1–3

Day 1

The Galatians' Experience. Read Galatians 3:1–3

1. How did Paul feel about the Galatians' turning back to the law (3:1) to earn salvation (3:1)?

> **FYI: foolish** "*anoetos* "NT:453 signifies 'not understanding' (a negative, *noeo*, 'to perceive, understand'), not applying nous, 'the mind,' Luke 24:25; in Rom 1:14 and Gal 3:1,3 it signifies 'senseless,' an unworthy lack of understanding; sometimes it carries a moral reproach" (Vine 1985, 246).
>
> b**ewitched** NT:940 "*baskaino* to malign, i.e. (by extension) to fascinate (by false representations)" (Strong 2009, 1613).

2. What and how had the people learned about Jesus Christ (3:1)?

3. In the following verses, underline the words that describe our relationship/standing with God because of Christ's death on the cross.

- Romans 5:1–2,9 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand….Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. NASU
- Colossians 1:13–14 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,[14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. NASU
- 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God… NASU
- Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. NIV

4. List the things that are contrasted in 3:2. What is the answer to Paul's rhetorical question?

5. List the things are contrasted in 3:3. What is the answer to Paul's question? What did Jesus say about this? See John 15:5.

> **FYI: flesh** NT:4561 "*sarx*; flesh...(by extension) the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as the symbol of what is external... or (by implication) human nature (with its frailties [physically or morally] and passions), or (specifically) a human being" (Strong 2009, 1668).
>
> "Paul's point is that the Spirit came to indwell the Galatians by faith. That same Spirit is working in them, enabling them to grow in the Christian life. Why, then, would they replace the work of the Spirit with living in the power of their own works? Paul couldn't be clearer that the continuation of the Christian life (sanctification) is just as much a result of grace through faith apart from works as the beginning of the Christ life (justification). That is...grace is the way to life and the way of life" (Swindoll 2015, 64).

Having begun in the Spirit (3:3) "'You received the greatest gift – the Holy Spirit of God – by faith. Are you going on from there, not by faith, but by trusting in your own obedience under the Law of Moses?'…When the works of the flesh are substituted for faith, self-confidence and pride are the inevitable result. '[Man] prefers to believe in the proud falsehoods of his own heart, which delude him into the flattering hope that he may merit eternal life.' (Spurgeon)" (Guzik 2025).

6. Underline the phrases that describe the problems with the flesh (sinful nature/old self).

- Romans 7:18–19 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. [19] For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do–this I keep on doing. NIV
- Galatians 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. NASU
- 2 Peter 2:10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. NIV
- 1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. NASU
- Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? NKJV

7. What kind of focus do we need to walk in God's strength and not our own? See Colossians 3:1.

FYI: "Most people when asked, 'What is your understanding of the gospel?' respond, 'Christ died for my sins.' This is only part of the gospel. Christ was also raised from the dead, and it is through His resurrection that we see the full gospel. The full gospel can be summed up like this:
Jesus Christ gave His life for us; so that He could give His life to us; so that He can live His life through us." Bob George https://bobgeorge.net/teaching/closer–look/the–reality–of–the–resurrection/

8. From Titus 2:11–13, what motivates us when we are walking in the Spirit?

Applying the Word: When we are relying on Christ working in our lives versus our own work, how does our **focus** differ? How does our **motive** differ? How does our **relationship** with Christ differ? How does our **source of love** differ?...

Extra Digging Deeper Questions

- Galatians 3 key words: "spirit, law, faith, believe, righteousness, justify, blessed, curse, grace, covenant, promise"

Day 2

Questions About the Past. Read Galatians 3:4–5

1. If the Galatians went back to a works righteousness, what would happen to their progress in the faith (3:4)? See Acts 14:2,5,19,22 for opposition in Galatia.

- From Galatians 4:11 and 5:7, what were Paul's other fears concerning their progress in the faith?

FYI: "Apparently, the Galatians had (perhaps when Paul was among them) suffered for the principle of faith (probably at the hands of legalistic Christians). Does their departure from the principle of faith mean that this past suffering was **in vain**? We know that Paul did suffer persecution in this region. Acts 14 makes it clear that Paul and his companions were persecuted vigorously (Paul even being stoned and left for dead) by the Jews when they were among the cities of Galatia. Surely some of this persecution spilled over to the Christian congregations Paul left behind in Galatia" (Guzik 2025).

2. Under what circumstances had early Christians experienced the joy of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:6)?

- According to Hebrews 10:32–36, what were some of the ways Christians had suffered?

3. Besides giving them the Spirit, what else had God given them (3:5)? (Read Acts 14:3,8–10 for examples of the kind of miracles the Galatians had witnessed.)

FYI: "Under law you never experience peace or rest in the Christian life. Why? Because your work is never done. A 'spiritual restlessness; results, where you are always looking for the 'something more' that will transform your Christian life into reality. It's always around the corner: at the next seminar, in the next book, in finding that spiritual experience—never resting in Christ Himself who lives in you, who has already done it all, who has already given you everything you need" (George 1989, 145–146).

4. What did Paul say about the work of God in his own life?

- 1 Corinthians 15:10

- 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

FYI: "We must go back again and again to the gospel of Christ crucified, so that our hearts are more deeply gripped by the reality of what He did and **who we are in Him.**.
We are not only saved by the gospel, but we also grow by the gospel. Paul is saying that we don't begin by faith and then proceed and grow through our works. We are not only justified by faith in Christ, we are also sanctified by faith in Christ. We never leave the gospel behind" (Keller 2013, 68,65).

FYI: "Faith is laying hold of Jesus Christ personally. There is no merit in it. It is not another 'work.' Its value is not in itself, but entirely in its object, Jesus Christ" (1986, Stott 82).

"[Legalism] is a wrong attitude toward the code of laws under which a person lives. Legalism involves the presence of law, the wrong motive toward obeying that law and often the wrong use of the power provided to keep the law, but is basically a wrong attitude. Thus legalism may be defined as 'a fleshly attitute which conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self'" (Swindoll 1987, 48).

5. In the following verses, underline the changes in behavior our faith in Christ produces.

- Romans 6:1–2, 6–7 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? [2] By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?...[6] For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— [7] because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. NIV

- Romans 7:6 now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. NIV

- 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. NASU

- Colossians 3:12–13 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. NASB

ᘓ **Applying the Word:** Pick one thing that you are struggling with such as anger, unforgiveness, pride, a feeling of unworthiness, anxiety, a controlling spirit, materialism, etc. How does a focus on all that Christ has done for you and all that you are to Him help you with that? How much do you struggle **believing** God is able and willing to handle these things for you when you ask?

Extra Digging Deeper

- Read through "The Law in the Gospel Life" at the end of the lesson. Mark any thoughts you would like to share.

Day 3
The Holy Spirit

1. In the following, underline titles given to the Holy Spirit.

- Genesis 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. NASU
- Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD— NIV
- Matthew 10:19–20 "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." NASU
- John 14:16–17 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; **17** *the Helper is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know *Him; but* you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you. NASB
- Galatians 4:6–7 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." NIV
- Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. NASU
- Romans 8:1–2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. NIV
- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate[a] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. NIV
- 1 Peter 1:10–11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. NIV
- 1 Peter 4:14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. NIV

2. Go back through the verses above and list some of the work the Holy Spirit does.

3. In the following verses, underline more of the work the Holy Spirit does in us and for us.

- John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." NIV

- John 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: NIV

- Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. NIV

- Romans 8:15–16 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. NIV

- Romans 8:26–27 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

- Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. NIV

- Galatians 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self–control; against such things there is no law.

- Ephesians 1:13–14 …Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession–to the praise of his glory. NIV

- 2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

- 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. NIV

4. What do we need to recognize about the responsibility this gives us? 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

5. What can we do to the Holy Spirit's work in us?

- Ephesians 4:39

- Acts 7:51

6. Underline for what purposes or to what end God works in us.

- Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. NIV
- Hebrews 13:20–21 May the God of peace…equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. NIV
- Ephesians 3:16–19 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. NASU
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. NIV
- 2 Peter 1:3–4 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. [4] Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. NIV
- Colossians 1:11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, NIV

Applying the Word: How would you explain to someone how God works in your life through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit?

Extra Digging Deeper Questions

- What do you learn about the flesh versus following the Spirit in Romans 8:5–8?

Day 4

Abraham's Example. Read Galatians 3:6–9

1. On what basis was Abraham declared righteous (3:6)? See Genesis 15:1–5.

- How does Romans 4:1–8 expand on this?

- From Romans 4:9–10, what state was Abraham in when he believed and was credited/accounted with righteousness?

FYI: "In Genesis 15 we read about the covenant God made with Abraham. In that day, you would confirm an oath or covenant with someone by cutting animal sacrifices in half and placing them in two rows...Both parties would then walk together through the sacrifices, but something unique happened when this covanant was made (Gen 15:7—21). When God enacted the covenant, Abraham was asleep. Only the Lord passed between the pieces such that He made the covenant, and He did it based on His grace, not Abraham's works" (Platt and Merida 2014, 56).

"When God 'credits righteousness', He is conferring a legal status on someone. He treats them as actually righteous and free from condemnation, even though they are still actually unrighteous in the heart and behavior…Paul (and Abraham) are showing that it is possible to be loved and accepted by God while we are ourselves sinful and imperfect" (Keller 2013, 71–72).

"We should be careful to say that Abraham's faith did not make him righteous. Abraham's *God* made him righteous, by accounting his faith to him for righteousness… '*Believed*, of course, means more than that he accepted what God said as true …it means that he trusted God.' (Morris)" (Guzik 2025).

2. Why would using a passage from the Old Testament and the example of the father of the Jewish nation be powerful in refuting the Judaizers? See John 8:39–40,56–58.

FYI: "This first Hebrew was not justified by keeping the Law but by faith! More than a decade passed before God even instituted circumcision (Gen. 17) , and Moses wouldn't receive the Law until some four hundred years later!" (Swindoll 2015, 66).

3. Read through the following and mark the promises God gave and Abraham's responses.

- Genesis 12:1–3, 6–7 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and
  your father's household to the land I will show you. **2** "I will make you into a great nation, and I
  will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing **3** I will bless those who
  bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed
  through you."
  4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy–five
  years old when he set out from Harran. **5** He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the
  possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set
  out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.
  6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At
  that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your
  offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.
  NIV

- Genesis 15:1–6 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." **2** But Abram said, Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."
4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." **5** He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. NIV

4. What does Abraham's experience demonstrate about not connecting circumcision or any other works of the law with salvation or receiving the Spirit (3:6–7)?

5. How does a person qualify as a "son/descendant" of Abraham?

- 3:7 (See Romans 4:23–24.)

- 3:29

> **FYI:** "What does it mean to have faith like Abraham? First...He had to believe and trust what God actually said in His promise to save...you can believe in God without believing God!
> Second, Abraham shows that saving faith is faith in God's provision, not our performance. Abraham was childless...with a barren wife. The promise of an heir depended wholly on God, not on Abraham at all." (Keller 2013, 73–74).

6. When was the gospel "preached" (3:8) and why? Why is that significant in the discussion about law and faith? See 3:17–18.

- In John 8:56, what did Jesus say Abraham saw by faith?

7. What amazing news is for "those who are of faith" (3:9)? What title did Paul give Abraham in 3:9?

8. In John 5:46, Jesus said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." Since Abraham and Moses lived and died before Jesus was born, what do you think it means that Abraham saw Jesus' day and Moses wrote about Jesus?

ℭ **Applying the Word:** How should the understanding that we are accepted by faith alone affect our view and relation to others who are "in Christ"?

📖 **Treasured Truth:** What will you take away from this week's teaching, studying, or small–group discussion that impacted your thinking and/or encouraged your heart?

Extra Digging Deeper Questions

a) From Hebrews 11. how did Abraham and Sarah show their faith? Where was their focus?

- 11:8
- 11:9–10
- 11:11
- 11:13
- 11:16
- 11:17–18
- 11:19

b) How did Moses show his faith? See Hebrews 11:24–27.

c) In Romans 4:18–22, what else do you learn about Abraham's faith?

The Law in the Gospel Life

There is no more practical question than that of the relationship of a Christian to the law of God. Whenever we hear the radical claims of salvation–by–grace, we immediately ask the following questions. "If we are 'free from the law' does that mean I don't have to obey the law of God?" "Why then should I strive to live a holy life?"…

The law's true purpose is instructive. It points beyond itself, just as the tutor seeks to prepare the children for lives as adults, as free persons…It seeks to show us our need for salvation by grace (because we cannot obey it). It even indicates our need to move **beyond rewards and punishments into a motivation of gratitude and love** toward God as the basis for our obedience. So the law continually emphasizes…that we need a righteousness, a power, a love for God beyond ourselves and beyond the law...

The gospel means that we no longer obey the law out of fear of rejection and hope of salvation–by–performance. But when we grasp salvation–by–promise, our hearts are filled with gratitude and a desire to please and be like our Savior…**Grateful joy is a motive that will lead to much more endurance in obedience than fearful compliance**. Fearful compliance makes obedience a drudgery that can't take adversity…Without the gospel, we may obey the law, but we will hate it. We will use it, but we will not truly love it…

If we obey God's law with*out* a belief that we are already accepted and loved in Christ, then in all our "doing–good" we are really looking to something more than Jesus to be the *real* source of our meaning, and happiness. We are trusting in our being a good parent, or being a good spouse, or our moral uprightness, or our spiritual performance, or our service to other people as our *real* "Saviors." If we aren't sure God already loves us in Christ we will be looking to something else as our foundational significance and worth…

Every sin is rooted in the inordinate lust for something which comes because we are trusting in that thing rather than in Christ for our righteousness or salvation. At the moment we sin it is because we are looking to something to give us what only Jesus can give us…

For example, we should not simply say, "Lord, I have a problem with anger. Please remove it by your power! Give me the power to forgive." Rather, we should apply the gospel to ourselves at that point. Using Paul's paradigm, uncontrolled bitterness — and a lack of spiritual power — *must* be coming from *"the flesh."* It means that though we began with Jesus as Savior, something now is becoming our functional Savior instead of Jesus. Instead of believing that Christ is our hope and goodness, we are looking to something else as a hope, to some other way to make us feel good and complete.

So instead of just hoping God will remove our anger or simply exercising will–power against it, we should ask, "If I am being too angry and unforgiving, what is it that I think I need so much? What is being withheld that I feel I must have to feel complete, to have hope, to feel like a person of worth?" Usually, deep anger is because of something like that. Notice how a "Comfort" person or an "Approval" person might have different things he feels he needs for meaning. These are functional saviors. When they are blocked, we get bitter. But the answer to the bitterness is not

simply trying harder to directly control anger. Instead, we need to repent for the self–righteousness and the lack of rejoicing in the finished work of Christ which is at the root of the anger.

Case study — A Lie What if you find that you have a habit of lying? What do you do about it?

Moralistic ways to stop lying:
Fear: "I must stop doing this because God will punish me, he won't bless me."
Pride: "I must stop doing this, because I'm a good Christian. I don't want to be like the kind of person who lies."
In general, you will find that the more you simply lay Biblical principles on your heart, the more your heart resists it. (Rom.7:21 — Paul says *"When I [most] want to do good, evil lies close at hand…"*)

The gospel way to stop lying:
First, ask the question: "Why am I lying in this particular situation?" The reason we lie (or ever do any sin) is because at that moment there is something we feel that we simply must have and so we lie. One typical reason that we lie (though it is by no means the only one) is because we are deeply fearful of losing face or someone's approval…We are looking more to human approval than to Jesus as a source of worth, meaning and happiness. Under the sin of lying is the failure to rejoice in and believe in our acceptance in Christ. Under the sin of lying is a kind of heart–unbelief in the gospel…

Anything you add to Jesus Christ as a requirement for a happy life is a functional salvation, a pseudo–lord, and it is controlling you, whether it be power, approval, comfort or control. The only way to change your habit of lying is to repent of your failure to believe the gospel, that you are not saved and acceptable by pursuing this goal and serving this master, but through the grace of Jesus Christ…

Unless we believe the gospel, we will be driven in all we do, whether obeying or disobeying, by pride ("self–love") or fear ("of damnation"). Mere moral effort without the gospel may restrain the heart but cannot truly change the heart. It "jury rigs" the evil of the heart to produce moral behavior out of self–interest...If you are obeying the law without deep joy in your acceptance in Christ, you are not *loving God with all your heart.* You are not obeying God *for God*. *You* are being moral so that you can put God in your debt, so he owes you a comfortable life...You are being moral in the service of self–salvation, out of the fear and pride that arise without an identity built on Christ in the gospel.

– by Tim Keller