

*Galatians—Grace Above the Law*  
*Our Freedom in Christ*

**Lesson 4—Galatians 3.1-14**

***Sola Fide (By Faith Alone)***

There is no shortage of confusion when it comes to the role of the Mosaic Law in the life of a Christian. On the far extreme some make a profession of faith believing this entitles them to live any way they please including a life of sin and self-indulgence. On the other extreme some professing Christians overlay many of the 613 laws of the Old Testament on their Christian faith and attempt through sheer will-power to live what they feel is expected of them in Christ.

I recently had dinner with a young man who had grown up in a legalistic church which required him to keep many Old Testament laws including worshipping on the Sabbath. Unfortunately, with this emphasis on works he had never experienced the joy of salvation that is the birthright of every true believer and had wandered from the faith. One of our first talking points was the purpose of the Law. He rightfully wanted to know, what was God's purpose in giving the Law? Under the old covenant the law served three purposes: (1) to distinguish the nation Israel from surrounding peoples, (2) to serve as a moral guide to restrain their behavior, (3) and to reveal their sinfulness and need for God's mercy and grace. Keeping these laws separated the Jews as a holy people unto the Lord (Leviticus 20:26).

David Stern M.D. and S.I. McMillen M.D. published *None of These Diseases* (based on Exodus 15:26) which demonstrated the practical wisdom in keeping God's commandments for health and well-being. One example given by these doctors was the coincidence of the highest level of prothrombin (a factor necessary for blood to clot) on the eighth day after birth and the required circumcision of males on that same day.

Surveys have shown that the majority of Americans believe that our good deeds will be weighed against our bad deeds on a sort of celestial scale of justice and if the scale tips in our favor we're saved. However, God's standards are far more exacting and require absolute perfection. James tells us that if we keep the whole law but stumble at one point we are guilty of breaking all of the commandments (James 2:10). By way of analogy, you are in a hurry and run through a stop sign. As the police officer pulls you over you try to convince him not to write you a ticket, arguing that you normally obey all of the traffic laws.

J. Vernon McGee tells us the Law acts like a mirror that reveals our sins but is powerless to remove them. It is through the Law that we realize we are helpless to save ourselves and must fall upon the mercy of God and His gracious offer of salvation through belief and acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. To paraphrase Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Law opens our eyes and shuts our mouths in regards to salvation (Romans 3:19).

As our passage of study this week clearly states we are saved by grace through faith and not by keeping the law. Ephesians 2:8-9 says it so well, "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment *and* made partakers of Christ's salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law's demands], lest any man should boast (Amplified Bible)". But liberty from the law does not grant us license to live any way we want. The very next verse, Ephesians 2:10, states we are created for good works in Christ. Commenting on these verses Martin Luther once said, "It is faith alone that saves but the faith that saves is never alone."<sup>1</sup>

Living a life in accordance with the precepts of grace will please God (Hebrews 13:16), will demonstrate our love for Christ (John 14:15), will serve as a witness to non-believers (1 Peter 2:12), will help others (Titus 3:8, 14) and will bring joy and blessing to our own hearts (John 15:10-11). It is only possible through the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit that we can live a life which glorifies God. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, the Law which was once external written on tablets of stone, is now internal written on our heart through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:3-7). In seeking to find solid middle ground between the two extreme views of the Law mentioned in the opening statement, the following chart is not a to-do list but a spiritual litmus test

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/26222-we-are-saved-by-faith-alone-but-the-faith-that>

containing attitudes and activities commended in the New Testament. It should allow us to find those areas of our life which we need to be prayerfully yield to the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2).<sup>2</sup>

<b>Actions Toward God</b>	<b>Actions Towards Others</b>	<b>Actions Toward Self</b>
Trust Him (Mark 11:22; John 14:1; Heb. 11:6).	Love all, especially our brethren (Jn. 15:17; Rom 12:10; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:23)	Be holy (1 Pet 1:15; 2:11; 2 Pet 3:1)
Love Him and seek to know Him better (1 John 5:2; Phil 3:10, 15; Jas 4:8).	Be sympathetic and compassionate (Eph. 4:32; Phil 2:4; Col 3:12)	Cleave to the good and do good to all (Rom 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:15)
Be thankful, worship and praise Him (John 4:23; Col 3:15; Heb. 13:15.)	Forgive and forbear (Rom 12:19; Eph. 4:32; Col 3:13)	Study the Word of God and meditate on sacred things (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Tim 2:15)
Serve Him (Rom 12:6-8, 11; 1 Cor. 15:58).	Deal honestly and fairly (Rom 12:17b; 13:7; 1 Thess. 4:12; Jas 2:1)	Grow spiritually (2 Pet 3:18)
Pray to Him (Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2)	Do good to all and help all (Gal 6:2, 10; 1 Thess. 5:15; Titus 3:1; Heb. 13:16)	Think on good things (Phil 4:8)
Live in accordance with His will (Rom 12:1; Jas 4:7)	Tell the truth (Eph. 4:25)	Think soberly of yourself (Rom 12:3)
Walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:18)	Be courteous, live peaceably (Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 2:17; 3:8)	Be ambitious in the right way (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1; 2 Cor. 5:4)
Hold fast to sound doctrine and contend for the faith (2 Tim 1:13; Heb. 13:9; Jude 3)	Treat others as we would like for them to treat us (Luke 6:31; Rom 12:17a)	Be content with what God gives you (Heb 13:5)
Witness for Christ (Jn. 15:27; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet 3:15)	Provide a good example(1 Cor. 8:9, 13; Phil 2:15)	Rejoice in the Lord (Rom 12:12; Phil 3:1; 1 Thess. 5:16)
Do everything as unto Him (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 6:7-8; Col 3:17,23-24)	Urge brethren to good works, seek to restore backsliders (Gal 6:1; Heb 10:24)	Live in the light of the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 9:24)
Be diligent in devotion and study of His Word (Jn. 5:39; 2 Tim 2:15; Jas 4:8; 1 Pet 2:2)	Do not lie or bear false witness (Eph. 4:25; Col 3:9; Titus 2:3)	Judge yourself and confess sins to God (1 Cor. 11:31; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 1:9)
Do not have idols (1 Cor. 10:7; Eph. 5:3; Phil 3:19;	Do not steal (Eph. 4:28; 1 Pet 4:15)	Conserve time for good purposes (Eph. 5:11; Col 4:5)

<sup>2</sup> <https://bible.org/article/mosaic-law-its-function-and-purpose-new-testament>

Col 3:5; Heb. 13:15; 1 John 5:21)		
Do not receive false teachers (2 Jn. 10)	Do not murder (1 Pet 4:15)	Cultivate your mind (1 Pet 1:13)
Do not mock or speak against God (Gal 6:7; Col 3:8)	Don't commit adultery or fornication (1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:13)	Do useful work (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:12)
	Don't judge others or speak evil of them (Rom 14:13; Titus 3:2; Jas 4:11)	Keep your body clean and in good health (1 Cor. 6:15, 19, 20, 10:31; Rom 12:1)
	Do not be yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14)	Abhor evil (Rom 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:22)
	Don't fellowship with professed Christians living in scandalous sin (1 Cor. 5:11)	Avoid pride (Rom 12:3; Jas 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6)
	Don't go to law with other believers (1 Cor. 6:l)	Don't conform or love world (Rom 12:2; 1 John 2:15)
	Do not glory in men (1 Cor. 3:21)	Do not fellowship with evil (Eph. 5:11)
	Do not have unpaid debts (Rom 13:8)	Do not sin through anger (Eph. 4:26)
	Avoid troublemakers and useless disputes (Rom 16:17; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:12)	Do not worry (Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7; 1 John 14:1,27)
		Do not use filthy speech (Eph. 4:29; 5:4)
		Do not become drunk (Eph. 5:18)
		Do not complain (1 Cor. 10:10; Phil 2:14)

### Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times.

### Scripture Meditation/Memorization

One of the most fundamental and rewarding Christian disciplines that pays back in full spiritual dividends is Bible meditation/memorization. It is an absolutely fundamental in the formation of your spiritual development, spiritual walk and faith growth. In Psalm 1:1-2 (NLT), the Psalmist warrior, King David said,

*“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.  
But they delight in the law of the Lord,  
meditating on it day and night.”*

Use the suggested verse(s) to meditate on during the course of this week's study.

**Memory Verse**

*“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”—Galatians 3:24 (ESV)*

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**Galatians 3:1-5—Defense of Justification by Faith Based on Experience**

Verse 1 sounds fairly harsh in the English Standard Version (“O foolish Galatians”) but it’s even worse in the Phillips translation (“O dear idiots of Galatia”). It was meant to wake-up, not insult those reading the letter. The Greek word Paul used referred to someone, though intellectually capable, who failed to use common sense, not the word *moros* from which we get our word moron. He will use six rhetorical questions in trying to get them back on the right theological track.

1. The Galatians had been led astray spiritually from the message they had received from Paul. As you read this section what is the essence of the gospel message that Paul had preached to the Galatians?

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2. From this passage throughout the remainder of the epistle Paul frequently focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit which is mentioned sixteen times. How does Paul in this section use the work of the Holy Spirit as evidence of conversion and salvation by faith alone?

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3. Paul asks the Galatians six rhetorical questions in the first five verses. Summarize what he asked and how these questions would help bring the Galatians back to their senses spiritually?

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4. What do the following passages teach us about the presence of the Holy Spirit giving evidence of a true spiritual conversion of salvation?

- a. Romans 8:9-11

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- b. Ephesians 1:13

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- c. Acts 15:7-8

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**Galatians 3:6-14—*Defense of Justification by Faith Based on Scripture***

John MacArthur comments on this passage, “although experience in itself is not entirely reliable evidence of spiritual reality, it nevertheless is a powerful apologetic when closely linked with and built on scriptural truth”. Paul now moves on to use the very scriptures misused by the Judaizers to prove his point that they are saved by faith alone.

1. Abraham was considered the patriarch of the Jewish people but he is also the patriarch of all who by faith accept God’s promises. What do the following

passages teach us about God's promised blessings to Abraham and his descendants?

- a. Galatians 3:7-8 (note the Greek word for Gentiles is *ethnos* from which we get our word ethnic)

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- b. Genesis 12: 2-3 (this is Abraham's first call from God at age 75).

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- 2. The chronology (order) of events is very important. The time gaps between God's promise to Abraham and the covenant of circumcision was about 25 years and an additional 430 years to the giving of the Law to Moses. The Judaizers maintain that Abraham won favor with God by keeping his commandments (most notably circumcision) while Paul believed he was justified by faith. What do the following scriptures teach us?

- a. James 2:23

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- b. Genesis 15:1-6

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- c. Romans 4:4-11

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3. Many outside the church, and unfortunately some within the church, believe that salvation is attained by weighing our good deeds against our bad deeds in a sort of cosmic scale of justice. God's standards are infinitely higher. He expects perfection. What do you learn about justification by keeping most of the laws?

a. Galatians 3:11-12

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b. James 2:10-11

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4. The bad news is that even for the best of us we cannot be justified by keeping the law. Fortunately Paul shares the good news with us in verses 13 and 14 of Galatians. Explain this in your own words.

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5. \*The "curse of the law" from which Christ redeemed us must be the curse resting on us for our disobedience (v. 10). And He redeemed us from it by "becoming a curse" Himself. He voluntarily took our curse upon Himself in order to deliver us from it. What does it mean to you that Christ became a curse for us?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Question taken from Galatians—Experiencing the Grace of Christ, John Stott Bible Studies, InterVarsity Press-USA, 1998



6. \*Consider ways that you might have fallen into trying to please God or earn His favour by your own efforts. How does this passage (Galatians 3:1-14 encourage you to examine your heart?<sup>4</sup>

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7. \*Name all the ways you can of that Jesus Christ has done for you what you could not do for yourself. Praise him for His sufficiency.<sup>5</sup>

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### ***Lesson 4 Summary/Take Away***

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, “What did you learn?” We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

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<sup>4</sup> Question taken from Galatians—Experiencing the Grace of Christ, John Stott Bible Studies, InterVarsity Press-USA, 1998

<sup>5</sup> Question taken from Galatians—Experiencing the Grace of Christ, John Stott Bible Studies, InterVarsity Press-USA, 1998

**Memory Verse**

*“So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”—Galatians 3:24 (ESV)*

**Key Words/Phrases**

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible. *How would these phrases instruct or encourage us today?*

Christ Has Redeemed Us (Galatians 3:13)

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