



“Law School”
Galatians 3
— Small Group Plan —

In every area of life, from the cradle to the grave, we are conditioned by a works/reward system.

*If you behave yourself,
you’ll get an ice-cream treat.*

*If you have perfect attendance,
you’ll get a gold star by your name.*

*If you earn a certain grade-point average,
you’ll get a scholarship.*

*If you put in a lot of hours,
you’ll get a promotion.*

We live in a culture of human performance, but we follow a God of grace. We exist in a world of conditional love, and yet we try to be like a God of unconditional love. We live in a society of selfishness, but take as our symbol a cross of selfless sacrifice.

This is the difference between darkness and light. And the constant question in this tug-of-war is who will be pulled over the line? Who will win the battle of influence? Grace or human performance?

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- In what areas of life are you tempted to earn God’s favor by your performance?
- Where did this idea come from?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— SPIRIT OR LAW —

Galatians 3:1-5

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 observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ⁴ Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing? ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

- Find all the occurrences of the word “Spirit” in vs. 1-5.
- Why does Paul contrast the “Spirit” with “the law” and “human effort?”
- How did the Galatians think the law could help them?
- What is the roll of God’s Spirit in Christian conversion — “beginning” (v. 3)?
- What is the roll of God’s Spirit in Christian living — “attain ...” (v. 3)?

— FAITH OR LAW—

Galatians 3:6-14

⁶ Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The 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 have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰ All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” ¹¹ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” ¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man 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 tree.” 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.

- Find the words “believe” and “faith” in vs. 6-14. Both are translated from the same Greek original — πίστις (pistis).
- Why does Paul contrast “faith” with “law” or “observing the law” (v. 10)?
- What is the “curse of the law” (v. 13)?
- Why doesn’t “observing the law” remove the curse (v. 10-11)?
- How did Christ “redeem us from the curse” (v. 13-14)?

— PROMISE OR LAW—

Galatians 3:15-22

¹⁵ Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God

and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. ¹⁹ What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰ A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. ²¹ Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

- Find the word “promise” in vs. 15-22.
- How is Jesus foreshadowed in God’s promise to Abraham?
- How can Christians today still participate in that ancient promise?

— THE POINT OF THE LAW—

Galatians 3:19-25

¹⁹ What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰ A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. ²¹ Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. ²³ Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

- Find these phrases:
 - “the purpose of the law”
 - “The law was put into effect”
 - “the law was put in charge”
 - “the supervision of the law”
- What is the common message of these phrases?
- If God’s law can’t save, why was it given?
- How does the law “lead us to Christ” (v. 24)?
- How can the law’s purpose be misunderstood?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- J. P. Phillips is the author of the best seller, *Your God is Too Small*. His translation of the Bible, first published in 1958, begins Galatians 3 with the words, “Dear idiots ...” They were clearly not getting it.
- Which part of God’s grace is the most difficult for you to “get?” Why?
- Why do so many Christians struggle with a personal performance religion?
- Jerry Jones, in *From Slavery to Sonship*, has written:

The object of your faith is more important than the quality of your faith. A strong faith in a weak bridge will get you wet, but a weak faith in a strong bridge will keep you dry.

- Close in prayer, confessing your weaknesses and thanking God for His strength. Spend time in thankful prayer.