

The Book of Galatians is one of the epistles written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches in the region of Galatia (modern-day Turkey). Paul wrote this letter to address a serious theological crisis: the churches were turning away from the gospel of grace and adopting a legalistic approach to salvation.

Right from the opening verse, Paul identifies himself as the author and emphasizes his divine calling—not from human authority, but directly from Jesus Christ:

Galatians 1:1 (ESV)

“Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...”

The Issue in Galatia

Paul expresses shock that the Galatian believers were so quickly deserting the gospel he preached. They were being influenced by Judaizers—Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile believers must obey the Mosaic Law (especially circumcision) to be saved.

Galatians 1:6–7 (ESV)

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one...”

Paul challenges them strongly in Galatians 3:1 (ESV):

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.”

Salvation by Grace Through Faith

Paul firmly states that the foundation of the Christian life is faith in Jesus Christ—not obedience to the law. The Galatian churches had begun in faith but were now trying to be perfected by works.

Galatians 3:3 (ESV)

“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

Paul’s message echoes Ephesians 2:8–9:

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

He clarifies that righteousness comes through faith, just as it did for Abraham:

Galatians 3:6–7 (ESV)

“Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was counted to him as

righteousness'? Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham."

The Role of the Law

Paul explains the purpose of the law: it was a guardian until Christ came. It reveals sin but cannot save.

Galatians 3:24-25 (ESV)

"So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."

He warns that those who rely on the law for justification are under a curse:

Galatians 3:10 (ESV)

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse..."

And if righteousness could come through the law, Christ died for no purpose:

Galatians 2:21 (ESV)

“...if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

Living by the Spirit, Not by the Flesh

Paul anticipates a misunderstanding: If we are saved by grace, does that mean we can live however we want? He answers that true believers have crucified the flesh and now live by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:24 (ESV)

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

The Christian life is not lawless—it is Spirit-led. The Spirit empowers us to overcome sin and produce godly character.

Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

He then lists the “works of the flesh” and warns that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19–21), contrasting them with the fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

Paul reminds believers that they are sons and daughters of God, adopted through Christ, and have received the Holy Spirit:

Galatians 4:6 (ESV)

“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”

This Spirit empowers us to live righteously—not by human strength, but through divine enablement.

The Central Message

The core message of Galatians is that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Legalism cannot save. Neither can religious rituals. Only faith working through love matters in Christ.

Galatians 5:6 (ESV)

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

As believers, we are called to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...”

This comes through prayer, studying Scripture, worship, and fellowship with God.

Final Thought

When we live under grace and walk by the Spirit, sin loses its power, and the law is fulfilled not through obligation, but through love.

Romans 8:2-4 (ESV)

“For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death... in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

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