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GALATIANS 3

Galatians Series

[PRAYER] Lord, we thank you for this day. It is a day that we haven't experienced before. We don't know exactly what will happen on this day, but we're grateful that we know you and that we have the privilege to walk this day with you as we do every day. So as we get up and thank you for the day each day this week, we ask that you would give us the awareness that this is an unusual day, not a mundane day. This is a special day where we can see your grace in ways that we may not have seen it before.

Lord, give us eyes to see things in ways that others may not see them. We thank you that you've given us your Holy Spirit inside of our hearts to prompt us daily, hourly, regularly. That you reveal things to us about things that are going on in our world that others don't see. We ask, Lord, that you would help us to be able to be sensitive, be spiritual, be able to see with those spiritual glasses as to what's going on around us from your perspective.

Lord, we are inundated with information. We carry it around in our cell phones and they beep at us regularly to tell us that things are going on. We look at the news or we stay up to date on Facebook. The tremendous amount of information is overwhelming to us sometimes. I would just suggest that many of us feel overwhelmed with just the number of things that are going on in life right now. So Lord, I want to ask that you would give us a pause in our days. That you would bring back gaps that we can focus on you, periods of silence maybe, or just time when we can read your word and focus on who you are so we can continue on with the rest of our day with the knowledge that you are at work. Always recognizing that this is the day that you've made and we can rejoice in it.

Now Father, as we look at your word we ask that you would teach us today and inspire us from your word. Give us some things that we may apply to our lives right now in our own hearts, but also use the truths from this passage to grow us and teach us so that this week might be a different week for you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles to Galatians 3. At Calvary Chapel we teach the Bible verse by verse and we're going through the books of the Bible. That doesn't mean we go through all the books in order. In fact I'm already thinking now that after Galatians I'll go to the book of Psalms. Just because of the worship that's there and we're just enjoying worship so much, I want to spend some time in the book of Psalms. But right now we're in the book of Galatians and we're taking it verse by verse and going through the whole book to try to understand it.

What I want you to do is I want you to get an impression of the book of Galatians as we go through it so that you'll remember it forever. Galatians is a book about salvation and freedom that we have in Christ. So as you hear the teaching today and put it together – you can go onto our Calvary Chapel app and hear the past sermons from Galatians – you can hear a theme of freedom that goes with our salvation that I think will encourage you and I hope you'll remember that going forward.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Galatians talk about Paul's personal experience. Chapters 3 and 4 talk about the doctrine that He wants to communicate in this book of Galatians, and chapters 5 and 6 are the application of it. What are we going to do once we have that information?

If you open your Bible and turn with me to Galatians 3:1 I just want to take the first phrase to get us started. In Galatians 3:1 he starts this way and you can feel the passion in his voice as he's writing. He says this: *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?*

The idea of being bewitched is who has led you astray against your wishes, without you realizing what's happened? Who has hypnotized you and moved you in a direction? This impression is that they've moved somewhere differently than where they should be. That somehow they've drifted.

I just want to pause there as I did this week in my own life just at verse 1 in the first phrase and say, "Lord, have I drifted?" Because I think there's a tendency for us to drift in our lives away from the essential things that are most important to the peripheral things that aren't the most important. So Paul is adamant here. He's saying, *Who has bewitched you? You foolish Galatians!*

I feel like I need to take that to heart in my own life. I don't want to be one of those people who's drifted away from the most important things. It's easy to fall away from the most important things and start getting sucked into other things that aren't as important.

The most important thing is that I know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and that I'm living for Him every day. That is the most important thing. Everything else can fall down somewhere down lower on the scale. But those things creep up and they become important to us. We start moving in a direction and as life happens, life makes us very busy, we start moving sometimes away from the centrality of the gospel in our lives. I think it's scary, it's dangerous. We need to be careful about it.

I used to be a scuba diver in Hawaii. Now that's the place you're going to go scuba diving, I'm telling you. My brother and I would go out scuba diving and the most scary experience I've ever had in my life is scuba diving at night. I mean that's planned.

We'd actually go out at night when it's dark. Mark, my brother, and I would swim out. You'd put all your gear on, but you'd swim out into the dark ocean about a quarter of a mile out, 1500 yards out to where the water is 30-45 feet deep. You're swimming on top of the water then because you don't want to use your air swimming out. And then when you get out there, you put

in your breathing apparatus, you turn on your underwater flashlight and you drop down about 30-45 feet down into the water.

It is an amazing thing. The ocean at night under water is beautiful. You're scared to death because it's so dark out there, but it's so beautiful. The fish are sleeping. You can go up to a fish and touch the fish and he'll just kind of move. They're just sleeping there on the floor.

This is why we're out at night (if you wonder why you'd do this) – on the floor all of the sea creatures that during the day go under the rocks are now out in the open. So now all the shells, whether they're inhabited by hermit crabs or regular shellfish are out running around.

We're out there to catch lobster. Now the law requires in Hawaii that you must catch lobster without weapons. You must use your hands. So you put a glove on, you reach down, and you grab the lobsters. But they're not moving around a lot and when you shine your light on them it stuns them.

The problem with a light under water is that it's different than in the air. Water refracts in the air and it just goes everywhere. So when you turn on a light it lights up the whole room. Under water a light stays as a laser and so you shine your light here, you can't see over there. You've got to be moving your light all over. So if you're afraid of the dark you've got a problem under water because there's darkness everywhere under water. You're shining the light just where you can see it.

It stuns the lobster and then you get them and you pick them up and you put them in your net bag. You swim around, find some more, and you fill your net bag and you come up.

When you come up where are you? Invariably you've drifted. I know you're wondering why I'm telling this story. But you've drifted. That's the problem. You drift for two reasons. One is that the water is moving under water. It's moving continually. The other reason you drift is because of your curiosity that there's something over there. Oh I want to go there. Or there's a turtle, I'm going to follow that turtle and see where he goes. So you find yourself in different places than when you went down. It's fascinating.

When you come up then, you're looking around. Where am I? Well you know you're not going that way because it's black out there. That's the ocean. But you see the land out there and there are all kinds of things. Where is the place where we went in?

In order to establish that place, we put a lantern on the beach. That lantern is Cheryl's. Cheryl is Mark's wife and she would stay there with the lantern and two pots with burners. One pot was boiling water. So when we brought our lobster in, we'd drop them right in the water, and that is fresh lobster. And then there is the one with butter in it. We would just dip it in the butter and we would eat it. I'm telling you, that was the best lobster that we could eat. Sometimes we'd get octopus and we'd do the same thing. You might not like that, but we'd cut it up and we'd put that in the butter and eat that. It's delicious.

Now here's the problem. When you come up, you're wondering where in the world is our part of the beach? The lantern that Cheryl would have on the beach would help us and we'd line that up with some other light behind it, either the billboard sign that was lit up or some streetlight that was on the road or something, and it would allow us to line those up and we'd know. Because invariably we drifted somewhere else.

Now you've got to ask yourself the question, if you've drifted in your spiritual life, what are your landmarks that are going to bring you back so you know where you need to be? That's going to be the key thing. You've got to know if you've drifted. How do you know? I just want you to ask that question in your own life. Have you drifted? If you say, "No," then how do you know? That's the question.

I would suggest that in our lives we want to have some things that will protect us so that we know if we've drifted. That's why I suggest that it's wise to have a daily quiet time. So you're getting together with the Lord. One of the 72 twenty-minute periods in a day (you know that there's 72 twenty-minute periods in a day), if you take one of them, the other 71 are going to be a lot easier. Take one and make sure you're on the right track, that Jesus Christ is the most important part of your day today. That's going to move you forward. Or just attending church regularly where you're fellowshiping with people, you're hearing the word of God taught, where you're worshiping the Lord. When those things happen it just draws you back.

That's why we come to church. You can worship at home by watching a TV show, you know a TV worship show of some kind. But we come together because there's some dynamic that takes place when we're together that encourages us for the next week. Those kinds of things are helpful. When you attend a small group meeting where they're doing Bible study, it just helps you to be centered so you know that you're not drifting.

Are you drifting? What is it that keeps you straight and helps you know where you're going so you're not drifting away?

Now the Galatians had drifted. I would suggest that many of us start strongly, but we end poorly. We want to be able to continue on and hang in there, hang the course.

When I lost twenty-five pounds recently and I went to my doctor and I said to my doctor, "Look. Here's my blood test results. My cholesterol levels are better now. Can I get off the medications?" Here's what he said to me. He said with a smile, "You can get off your medication if you can stay on your diet." I told him, "I'm not on a diet. I've changed my life!"

So we'll see. I started strongly. Will I be able to continue or will I drift? It's important for me in whatever I'm doing to make sure I'm focused on where I need to be, not just where I've been. We want to not only start well, we want to end well.

Who has bewitched you? Paul says to the Galatians. Who has led you astray in the wrong direction? Let's see what the problem was for them and how they drifted starting in the rest of that verse.

Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Now he says one thing, but he's going to ask three questions. I want to share those three questions with you because I think they'll help you understand a little bit more about the centrality of Christ in your life because these questions help us get the bearings here.

Question number one is in verse 2. *Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?*

He's referring to regeneration. Regeneration is a word that we use to get saved. Sometimes people say born again, some people say get saved, become a Christian, whatever you want to say. The theological term for it is regeneration. The question he's asking them is did you come to Christ by the law or the Spirit? By the law or the Spirit?

See, they had a problem. They were relying on the law and a list of rules instead of by the Spirit. He's trying to draw them back so he's saying, "How did you come to Christ in the first place?" It was about the Spirit.

Verse 3 says, *Are you so foolish?* Here's the second question. *After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?*

The second question has to do with sanctification. That's also what we call growing in Christ. Once you become a Christian you start to grow in your faith and in your walk with the Lord. How does that happen? Does it happen by the flesh? By "I'm going to work hard and do all my willpower." Or does it come by the Spirit of God? Of course the Galatians, if they're honest, would be answering the question it's going to come by the Spirit of God doing a work inside of me. That's what's going to happen.

Let's go on. Verse 4: *Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? So again I ask (here's the third question), does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?*

So now he's asking this third question that is a manifestation that it's pouring forth, it's coming out of your life so other people are seeing it. Are you demonstrating your faith by the power of the law or by the Spirit? That's the question he's asking. The emphasis here is that he's asking them now you've drifted toward the law and to rules and you've lost some of the Spirit.

We're going to talk a little bit more about what that looks like because they are making a significant mistake. They're focusing on legalism and legalism is defining their spirituality. Legalism is rules. You've got to do this this, this, this, and this or you're not spiritual. It's a list of rules. No. He's saying it's about the Spirit at work in your heart.

Here's the problem. If it's all about rules for you and you're setting up rules for yourself about spirituality then you're externally motivated. If you're relying on the Spirit of God inside of your heart prompting you then you're internally motivated. Change happens in our lives most effectively when we're internally motivated and not relying on external prompters. In fact this is what Jesus challenged the Pharisees about.

Do you remember the Pharisees? He even challenged them by saying this: You guys *are whitewashed tombs*. That's what Jesus called them. In other words, you whitewash them, you look good on the outside but the inside is full of all kind of corrupt stuff. You're whitewashed tombs. You look good on the outside. You have your rules all set up, but your heart has moved away, it's drifted. So it's important for us to recognize it's the Spirit in our lives that's the most important thing.

They have moved. They made a significant movement in their lives and they have a problem now. Now this is so important to Paul that he wants to illustrate this idea so they'll get it. Because if they miss this point and if we miss this point, our faith becomes more about rituals, rigmarole, ceremony. It becomes more about following some list of dos and don'ts as opposed to God alive and working in our hearts. Paul's saying that's a big mistake.

I want to illustrate this to you, he says, by going back to Abraham. He's actually going to give us three illustrations. One about Abraham, the second one is about a contract, and the third one is about a babysitter. Those are the three illustrations he's going to give in the rest of the chapter that I'd like to look at here.

So look at verse 6. It says, *So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Now why does he go back to Abraham? You have to remember Abraham was before the Jewish people. We consider Abraham to be the father of the Jews, but it wasn't until Abraham had a son named Isaac and Isaac had a son named Jacob and Jacob had twelve sons that you end up having the Jewish nation. So Abraham's before that. Furthermore, Abraham's before circumcision and the promise we're going to look at happens in Abraham's life before he was circumcised fourteen years later and it's before the law. So if we can go all the way back to Abraham then we might learn something very important about God and His plan for all of us. That's what Paul is doing. He's taking us before circumcision, before the law, before the Jewish nation, and he's going back to Abraham.

The lessons we learn from Abraham is that God is in control. God chose Abraham and he moved 3,000 miles away to the Promised Land, which wasn't called the Promised Land yet. But he went there to Palestine and God was doing a work in his life. God made a promise to him, and I'm going to put the promise up for you so you can see it.

We call this promise the Abrahamic covenant. It's a promise that was made to Abraham in the Old Testament in Genesis 12. It's an important promise. Paul is assuming you all know it because all the Jewish people would know it. The Galatian church is a Gentile church, but there are Jews that are there as well. So they know, everybody knows about the Abrahamic covenant. But we may have forgotten it. So I'm going to put up Genesis 12:2-3 for you so you can see the promise He made to Abraham.

Here's what He says to Abraham: *"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. I will bless those who bless you, and*

whoever curses you I will curse; and (this last statement is very important, at least for the argument that Paul is making in Galatians now) all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

That’s what He’s saying. Now that’s the covenant. I’ll come back to it in a moment, but that’s the promise that God made to Abraham way back in the book of Genesis, the twelfth chapter of the first book of the Bible. That’s how far we’re going back.

Now let’s go back to Galatians, our passage today and look at verse 7. It says, *Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham.*

What he’s saying is you see this last statement, that’s the gospel embedded in the promise to Abraham early on so that people would know that *all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you*. It’s because it’s through the line of Abraham and down forward that Jesus Christ will be born and all of us then have the privilege of being blessed because of Abraham’s family and his lineage and what’s going on.

So in verse 8 it says, *Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance (this is the gospel in the Old Testament. The good news – that’s what gospel means) to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

So he’s saying that this is something old. This is not something that’s new. God designed the plan. Jesus isn’t just an accident. He’s a part of a bigger plan that God designed from the very beginning. You can’t rely on works to save you, you need to go back even to the covenant that God made with Abraham and you’ll see that embedded even there is this promise that Jesus Christ would be coming. Not mentioned there, but there’s this plan that you’ll all be blessed. All of us. So we experience that blessing. It’s that work of Christ on the cross.

Verse 10: *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.”*

That means how many times do you have to lie to be a liar – once. How many times you have to murder to be a murderer – once. How many times you have to steal to be a thief – once. How many times you have to be an adulterer – once. Right? You’re cursed if you can’t continue with everything written in the Book of the Law.

This is why it’s so important. You know there’s some people who come to this issue of faith and they say, “Well I think God looks at me because there’s more good than bad.” Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let’s not try to figure out what’s logical. Let’s try to figure out what the Bible says. Because God says in His word that if you’re going to go by the law in works, you have to obey every piece of it, and there’s nobody that can do that. So you’re under a curse because of the law.

Verse 11: *Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”*

The righteous don't live by works. You cannot do everything that's mentioned in the law. You just can't do it all. So *the righteous live by faith*. In other words, it's the faith in Christ and what He's done for us.

In the end of our chapter today we're going to see how we're *clothed in Christ*. You need to put the clothes on of Christ and that is what he's talking about. That's what you have to do is take Christ into your life. *The righteous will live by faith*.

Verse 12: *The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” 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.”*

The point here is that Christ redeemed us. Do you see that in verse 13? *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*.

Now you have to understand what happened in salvation. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He took all of our sins. He took your sins that you committed in the past, the sins that you will commit in the future, He took my sins, He took all of our sins, and He died for them. So He became the curse, as it says in that verse. Right out of the scriptures it says in verse 13, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*. So when He died on the cross all of our sins went on Him. He became the curse for us so that we aren't cursed, so that we don't have that sin burden. So when we trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior He looks at Christ. He doesn't look at us. He looks at the righteousness that we have.

The beautiful thing about salvation is you're not just forgiven. Yes, that's the neat thing. Your sins are taken away and forgiveness takes place. But we're not just forgiven, we're also justified. Justified means we're given the righteousness of Christ. So when God looks at us, He doesn't just see absence of sin when we're saved. What He sees is the righteousness of Christ. So we can come boldly before God and openly before Him without fear of Him rejecting us because of sin because Christ died for all those sins. That's the beauty.

Paul's trying to remind them you can't rely on the list of dos and don'ts. You've got to rely on the Spirit. That's what's so important here. It's such a freeing concept for us to understand this because it just releases from us the whole problem of comparing ourselves to one another. It releases us from the problem of evaluating ourselves based on our good versus our bad. We don't have to do that. We rely on Christ because of who He is. We can easily compare ourselves to each other. We can always find someone worse than us and find someone better than us. If we find someone worse than us we can feel very proud that we're better than that person. If we find someone better than us, we go, “Oh man, I feel so inferior.” No, we don't do that. What we do is we're not comparing ourselves to someone else.

I like the story about the pastor who was called upon to do a funeral for a guy who was just rotten. This guy was a liar, he was a thief, he ruined people's lives. Terrible guy. And as a pastor

he had the job to get up and do the funeral. His brother comes to him in advance and says, “I would like to make a donation to your church of \$100,000 on one condition – that you say my brother was a saint.” The pastor says, “Okay. I can do that. Give me the \$100,000.” He puts it in the bank and then on the day of the funeral he says this: “We’re here today to remember so-and-so (this man) who was a terrible father, he was a scoundrel, he was a liar, he was a thief, he ruined people’s lives, but compared to his brother he was a saint.”

Now I would suggest that we often confine ourselves comparing ourselves to other people and that’s a mistake. We don’t want to do that. You are free before God. This is the beautiful thing about Galatians. It’s talking about our salvation and that we’re free before God.

In Hebrews 12 it’s talking about a race that we run. We’re running this race. Everybody’s running a race, but we’re not looking around to say, “Oh I’m going faster than that guy. Oh that guy’s ahead of me.” It says right there that our eyes are fixed on Jesus. We’re not comparing ourselves. This is so freeing because now we’re not comparing ourselves to someone else, we’re just living in the Spirit and allowing God to do this internal motivation, this work inside of us. Wow.

Verse 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.

That’s the salvation message right there in a nutshell. He’s saying there that Christ redeemed us so that we can have the blessing that we saw in that promise to Abraham. We can have that blessing ourselves.

Now notice it says in the end of verse 14, *so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit*. That’s what he’s trying to communicate to these Galatians. You have the Spirit of God inside of you. This is an amazing thing. Don’t lose this. In chapter 5 he’s going to talk about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We’re going there, but right now we’re in chapter 3. All these good things about the Spirit.

He’s going to use the word ‘Spirit’ eighteen times in the last four chapters of this book because the Holy Spirit is a person who comes to live inside of you when you accept Jesus Christ into your life. He empowers you to do what’s right. He empowers you to move forward in your life. He directs you in a powerful way.

Now Paul is going to say here in verse 15 I want to give you an example from modern day life. So go back to your passage in Galatians 3:15. He says, *Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life*. Do you see that it says that? He’s going to use this idea of a contract. *Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case*.

You can’t come and say, “Oh I’m just going to write something else on the covenant.” When it’s been set and the covenant has been signed and sealed then it’s done. You can’t make a change to it. So he’s going to use that to describe this particular situation. This is what’s so fascinating.

If we go back to the Abrahamic covenant, I want you to understand if you were to read ahead in Genesis 15-16 you would see how the covenant was sealed. In those days when a covenant was established, a very important covenant between two people, the two people would get together, they would take a goat, they'd kill the goat, split the goat in half, put the half the goat over here, half the goat over there, and they'd walk between it, and they'd essentially be saying, "I agree to do this and I agree to do that. If I don't keep my end of the bargain may I be like the goat split up and killed." In other words, we're making a serious agreement here.

Now when it comes to the Abrahamic covenant, here's what actually happened. God says to Abraham, "We're going to make a covenant. Prepare the elements for the covenant. I want you to get a ram, I want you to get a heifer (that's a cow), and I want you to get a goat. I want you to split them up." So this is a really big covenant. Three different animals split in half and a couple birds. They're all split there.

The next thing is they would walk through and each of them would agree to whatever they're going to do. Well here's what happens. Abraham is put to sleep. God then goes between the animals as a torch and a smoking pot going through there back and forth, reemphasizing the promise. Do you see the significance in that? What He's saying is, "You're not making any promises over here, Abraham. I'm the one making all the promises. This is an unconditional covenant. I'm making a promise to you and it's not determined by anything you do."

That's the beautiful thing about the covenant and that's what he's talking about in this passage in verse 15. There's a covenant established for us and it's unconditional; it's not dependent on your works. You can't think, "I'm going to earn my way before God." You can't. It comes by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Verse 16: The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

So the New Testament work of Christ is not a surprise to the Old Testament. In fact the way the Old Testament message is laid out, we don't have a lot of the details, but when Christ comes we go, "Whoa. Now I understand the Old Testament better!"

Verse 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. The promise continues on perpetually. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise.

So you've got to choose, Galatians. Are you going to have your list of rules or are you going to rely on the promise of God and have that freedom inside of the Spirit at work inside of you?

*But God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. That word grace is important. It's God's grace that He gives to us. It's amazing grace. We sing that song *Amazing Grace*. It talks about it in this passage here.*

Verse 19: *Why, then, was the law given at all? This is an interesting question. It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.*

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.

In other words, the law comes to reveal our sin. To reveal that we can't keep it all and we need a Savior. That's what he's saying here.

Verse 22: *But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. So it comes by faith, by belief. When you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes in and frees you on the inside. It's not about the law.*

Let's look at the babysitter illustration. Verse 23: *Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our babysitter. Maybe your version doesn't say babysitter, but that's the idea. It says guardian. The law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

He's saying to the Galatians, don't put yourself back under the guardian. Don't start adding things to salvation that says I've got to keep this list of rules in order to be saved. Rather you want to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and that provides us freedom from the inside where the Spirit is at work inside of your life. So amazing.

Verse 26: *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.* That's the issue here. If you're not saved today, if you're not a Christian, if you're not born again, if you're not living by the Spirit, whatever words you want to use, then the key here is to trust God by faith. To say, "God, I know I'm a sinner. I know I can't keep the law and I need you to work in my life. So I invite you in." And when He does, the Spirit comes into your heart and He empowers you to move forward. That's what salvation really is. So in our lesson today we're learning about salvation, how we get it, what it is, and what it does for us.

Verse 27: *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* In other words, you do have to do something. You have to take Christ and clothe yourself in Him. You have to put on the clothes of Jesus Christ. You have to accept Him into your life. Clothe yourself, accept the gift that God has given you. You can't earn it; you just take it. And when you do, you're clothed in this righteousness so when God sees you He sees your righteousness and you have that close relationship with Him.

It's amazing what God has done for us. It's beautiful. It's too easy. It's a free gift some would say. I would say it's a free gift, but it costs everything you have. So it's kind of an expensive gift too as we're looking at it. And it's not just for some. That's why he ends this chapter in verse 28.

It's not just for some. It's not just for the other people on the other side of the tracks. It's not just for someone else over here. It is for everyone, and he makes that clear in verse 28.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It's not ethnic specific. It's not gender specific. This is the message for everyone. Before the cross as we stand there we are all equal. That is such a beautiful freeing thing. I hope you're impressed by that because that's the message that Paul felt the Galatians were moving away from. That they were somehow defining spirituality by a list of rules.

There's nothing wrong with rules in your life if you want to have some rules that guide what you're going to do. Rules can be helpful. They become a container that help you work out spirituality in your life. But the danger is you get focused on the container and the Spirit moves and now you've got the container. You're not following the Spirit; you're just following the container.

You want to follow the Spirit. As the Spirit leads us and moves us in a different direction, He may adjust things. He may change the rules. So we focus on the Spirit and what He's doing. That is the most important thing.

So I would encourage you today, most of you have accepted Jesus Christ into your life, but it's a message for you I would suggest. Have you drifted? Have you moved away? You just need to go back and say, "You know, I realize the grace of God is amazing and I need to go back to the basics. I need to line myself up on the beach. I need to know the landmarks and that landmark is that today I want to remind myself that the most important thing for my life today is to know Jesus Christ personally. That is the most important thing.

If you haven't trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to do that. This is an adventure of faith is to be a Christian and to allow God to work. Yes, part of the adventure is being part of a fellowship like this, but I'm talking about the individual adventure as you're growing in Christ. God does amazing things. It's powerful to see what He does. And it all starts with that grace, that amazing grace that God does.

So I want to invite you. We're going to sing a song and if the Lord is speaking to your heart and you're saying, "Yes, I know I need this," then we're going to have prayer counselors on the side who will pray with you and help you come to know Christ in a very personal way. If you'd like to go and pray with them, I'd encourage you to do that as we sing this song. Allow this song to speak to you and allow God to speak to you in the midst of this song about His grace in your life and my life.

Let's stand. I'm going to pray and then we'll sing together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do thank you for what you're doing and for what you've done. We ask now that you'd speak to us in our hearts. Not just through our ears but in our hearts, that

you would prompt us to know you better, to teach us what it means to follow you in the Spirit. Lead us forward in our lives to new areas, to new ways. We desire to get to these new levels in our lives, Lord, but we know we can't do it through rules. We need it through the power of your Spirit. So we ask you now to empower us, to lead us, and to guide us today. In Jesus' name, amen.