

# Paul's Letter to the Galatians

## Chapter 3

### "Liberated or Loco?"

Two old profs are rocking in prolonged silence on the porch. One finally speaks. "Have you read Marx?" The other pauses... "Yeh, I think they're from these dang wicker chairs."

Paul is not into word games as he premieres the vibrant, intimate, peaceful, family relationship God wants to have with each of us. The Bible says our only peace is having the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, live in us, and we in Him (John 14:27).

### ***The REALLY Good News***

This letter to believers in the Galatian province of today's Turkey is Paul's aggressive defense of his message. Earlier he'd given them a flash from the risen Christ about God's free gift of forgiveness that's ours simply by believing, not by our efforts (Galatians 1:11-12).

This special roll-out of God's unconditional grace maintains that only a *perfect sacrifice* (Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God) could once and for all satisfy God's just demand for punishment for our sin. This mold-shattering news turns that 1<sup>st</sup> century world on its ear.

"Repent and be baptized to be forgiven" was John the Baptist's and the apostles' plea to Israel (Acts 2:38, 19:4). God would have set up the kingdom of heaven on earth with Jesus as King if Israel had repented for rejecting their Messiah (Romans 9-11). Thankfully, God did not give up on us. So He offers Paul's liberating Gospel for *both Jew and Gentile* which says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*" (Acts 16:31; 1 Timothy 1:15-16).

This Christian magna carta is our only "out pitch" from sin's death grip (Romans 3:19-31). Legalism says we must *earn* God's grace. Under the Old Testament plan forgiveness lasted 'til the next sacrifice when you must bring another offering to earn it back.

But God says we're now ***under Grace, not Law*** (Romans 6:14, 7:4-6)! And *grace* is *undeserved*; God does it *ALL* (Romans 5:1, 10:4; Ephesians 2:1-9; Philippians 2:13). Let's read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (p. 394, MSG) and 3:7-18 (p. 390, MSG).

Jesus tells Paul that His death and resurrection mean we're no longer doomed to hell for our sin. God has pardoned us not by what *we* do, but by giving us faith to trust what Jesus did *for* us.

## ***“You’re Killin’ Me”***

Beware of the dreaded *Works Virus* that can attack, making us think that we must be perfect in order to *be* saved and to *stay* saved. Sounds logical, certainly religious. But Galatians 2:20 is the game-changer, the “CROSSroads.” No more trying to “live the Christian life” to stay in God’s good graces; we’re set free. Let’s read Colossians 1:26-29 (p. 444, MSG), then Galatians 2:15-21 (p. 410, MSG).

**DISCUSS: What’s new and different about Paul’s message?**

Since Christ’s Spirit is now *in* the believer, He’s pleasing His Father *for* us! Christ is actually living *in, for* and *through* the believer, even *as* the believer! Nope, we’re not “little gods,” as some believe. We’re “carriers.” And, hopefully, quite contagious!

**DISCUSS: What would it look like to have Christ living His life *in* you, *through* you, even *as* you?**

## ***Turkey Stew***

Disturbed by Paul’s salvation-by-faith-only, some Jewish converts to Christ sidle up to the Galatians, promoting circumcision, Moses’ laws, rituals, traditions and No-No’s that seem harmless but produce pride or guilt. Paul condemns this “false” gospel. Good works will *follow* faith, he says, as a *response* to God’s love, not to *earn* it (Ephesians 2:8-10). Let’s read Galatians 1:6-9, p. 408 (MSG).

DISCUSS: Why do we think Jesus’ sacrifice needs our help to save us?

Let’s read our *text du jour*, Galatians 3:1-29 (p. 411, MSG)

## ***“Tu Eres Loco?”***

### ***Galatians 3:1-6***

Paul unloads, “You crazy, señor? Are you so deluded to think that God saved you by His grace through your faith in Jesus, yet you now deny that His Spirit alone keeps us saved and helps us live for God? We can’t do anything on our own that pleases God (Matthew 5:17; Romans 7:4-8). His Spirit in us fulfills the Law’s demands” (Romans 8:2-4). The Gospel is not a Prius hybrid, alternately powered by faith and works, as we read in Colossians 2:11-23, p. 445 MSG).

**DISCUSS: Why does grace seem too good to be true?**

Sonless at 90, Sara hooks up her 100-year-old hubbie with her maid. That one-nighter produces the centuries-old, ongoing Arab-Israeli sibling feud between Ishmael (“My way”) and Isaac (“God’s way”).

**DISCUSS: Describe a time when you ran ahead of God.**

### ***“What’s Faith Got To Do With It?”*** ***Galatians 3:7-12***

Four centuries before God inscribes the Law for Moses, Abraham mans up, puts his faith in God’s pledge to make him father of a great nation, and God brands him “righteous” (Genesis 12:8; 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 4:1-3). 3,000 years later a German monk tries everything to get right with God -- confessions, penances, praying to saints. Still no peace. His search leads him to “The righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). That discovery triggers the Reformation, exploding from the dynamite truth that God saves us based on what *Christ* did for us, not what *we* do for Christ.

**DISCUSS: What if you knew God would never again hold your sin against you (Romans 8:1; Psalm 103:7-14; Jude 24-25)?**

Snowboarder Kelly Clark won Olympic gold in ‘02 and bronze in 2010 in Vancouver. She says, "I thought being a Christian was going to church and following rules and all sorts of religious things. ... But it's about having a relationship with Jesus." Now she knows she doesn't have to do anything for God to love her. Faith sets us free!

**DISCUSS: How loved and accepted did you feel as a child? How does that affect how you feel toward God now?**

### ***Pass/Fail*** ***Galatians 3:13-24***

The Law shows us our sin but can’t save us since we can’t fully obey it (Deuteronomy 27:26; Leviticus 18:5). And it was the opening act for Jesus who met all the Law’s demands in His role as our stand-in.

God doesn’t grade on a curve. He’ll ask only one Yes/No question: “Did you put your trust in My Son” (Luke 18:9-14; Romans 7:2-6)?

### ***“Operators Are Standing By”*** ***Galatians 3:25-29***

Galatia's culture cast slaves as mere property, degraded women and called Gentiles "curs." But God through Paul welcomes ALL people as equals for whom His Son Jesus died on a Roman cross.

William Barclay says the gospel is the offer "of God's serenity for our lack of peace ... God's goodness for our moral failure ..." At the cross all sin – yours and mine – was forever forgiven. To have God's forgiveness applied to your account, just "Call on the name of the Lord, and you will be saved" (Romans 10:12-14).

His Deal

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