

# Never Forget the Gospel of Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] As we continue to work our way through this letter that reminds us there is no other gospel than the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Here in this section there is a reminder to the church in Galatia and a reminder to us never to forget the gospel of grace.

So we're going to read together chapter 3 verse 1 to 14. Let's hear God's word. You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 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? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing, if it really was for nothing?

[ 1 : 06 ] Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard? Consider Abraham. He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Understand then that those who believe are our children of Abraham. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham.

All nations will be blessed through you. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. 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. Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law because the righteous will live by faith. The law is not based on faith. On the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

[ 2 : 16 ] For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. 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.

Amen. Now I wonder, have you ever forgotten something and it was a big deal? I guess in a room this size, some of us would probably be characterized as forgetful people.

And sometimes it's nothing more than a mild inconvenience. You know, we leave and we forget our keys or we forget our wallet. Other times it can be a bigger deal. Maybe you've forgotten to pick up a child at the appointed time.

That can cause some tension. You maybe fail to pay an important bill or there's an important piece of paperwork you need to sign and you absentmindedly forget about it.

Sometimes our forgetfulness can have significant implications. And what Paul says to us here in this section is that bigger than anything else that we can forget, more damaging than anything else we can forget, is the loss that comes to us if we forget the gospel of grace.

[ 3 : 37 ] So here he is and he's writing to a church that at least some of them are veering off course. They've begun by following Jesus, But now some of them are turning back to this idea that they need to follow the law in order to earn God's acceptance.

And so throughout this letter, Paul is pulling them back to remember Jesus Christ. Remember he was crucified to rescue you. Remember that he was given to death in order to justify you so that God could look on us and declare us to be acceptable to him because of what Jesus had done on the cross.

And so here we find, not for the first time, Paul's speaking harshly to these Christians. He loves them and he's deeply concerned about the mistake that they are making.

So in verse 1, he calls them foolish. He says, it seems like someone must have put a spell on you because you have abandoned trusting in Jesus alone and you're thinking that you can contribute to

your salvation.

And he can call them foolish because he knew very well that they'd heard the gospel. So in verse 1, he says, Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

[ 4 : 58 ] Paul and others had clearly, powerfully, truly brought the good news of Jesus to them so they were without excuse in this context. He says, as it were, we presented Jesus as a great big sign.

Jesus Christ crucified. We had that front and center. For me, it makes me think of maybe Times Square in New York or Leicester Square down in London or city center Tokyo.

You know those huge neon signs that are everywhere. Here's this big event. You don't want to miss it. And that's what Paul has done for them. He's presented Jesus Christ crucified for their salvation so they wouldn't miss it, so they wouldn't lose sight of it.

Jesus Christ. Jesus, which means God saves. So here is Jesus, God's Savior, who's also God's Christ, God's chosen one, God's promised and anointed king.

And this one, this Jesus Christ was crucified for you. Here he reminds them once again, there was this completed work of salvation.

[ 6 : 03 ] Jesus accomplished the Father's plan of salvation. The benefits of his death are always available and they're freely offered to us. We need nothing else.

We should trust in nothing else. And so again, he's going to, in these 14 verses, going to teach us trusting in Jesus gives us everything.

We don't need anything more if we have our faith in Jesus. So then remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross is clearly vital to our life of faith. So here are three things that Paul encourages them, calls them to remember as those who had their faith in Jesus.

First of all, remember that you never move beyond the gospel. This is verses two to five. In that section, verse two to five, you see there's a whole range of a barrage of rhetorical questions.

All intended to drive his readers, to drive us to a single point. That the whole of the Christian life, from its beginning to its end, is built on the gospel of God's grace.

[ 7 : 12 ] At no point do we add anything else to that. So how does he show that to us? You see in that section as well, there's a lot of language of the spirit is prominent.

So for us today, we talk about becoming Christians. When we trust in the Lord Jesus, we would say a person has become a Christian. But in the early church, you see in the book of Acts, they would talk about receiving the spirit.

Believe the message of Jesus. Turn from your sins and you'll receive the Holy Spirit. The point is that the Holy Spirit is the one who makes us see that we need Jesus.

Pulls us away from being sort of self-reliant. It's through the Holy Spirit that we are born again, that we're given a new heart, we're given a new life.

It's by the spirit that we are adopted into the family of God. So the spirit is vital to the Christian life. And so Paul walks through a variety of phases of their Christian experience, showing that at every point, it's faith in Jesus and not keeping the law that counts.

[ 8 : 31 ] Just as every good story has a beginning and a middle and an ending, every good essay has an introduction, a body of evidence and a conclusion. So the story of salvation in our lives, in our experience of knowing Jesus has a beginning and a middle and it'll have an end in this life.

But there's just one theme throughout that story. And the theme is the gospel of grace, which the spirit applies and keeps on applying to our lives.

That theme never changes. So how does he talk about the beginning of faith? How does he talk about a person coming to believe in Jesus?

Look at verse 2. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Here comes this first rhetorical question. Did you receive the spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?

So this is Paul saying, remember, when you came into God's family, when you received the spirit, that was not because of your law keeping.

[ 9 : 43 ] It was because you believed with faith. So they heard the facts and the events of Jesus' life. They heard about his perfect obedience. They heard about his death on the cross for them to atone for their sin and to give them eternal life.

They heard about the resurrection and they believed. Not just they believed that these were true facts, but they placed all their trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

There was that personal response of faith. They were trusting in, they began trusting in Jesus' finished work. They didn't enter the kingdom through their own works.

What about the middle of their Christian experience? Verse 4. Have you suffered so much for nothing?

If it really was for nothing, does God give you a spirit and work miracles among you? Because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard? So he can look at their life.

[10:45] He can point them to reflect on their own experience, to see marks of them being true Christians. The spirit was with you as you were suffering for the Lord Jesus. The spirit was seen in power among you.

There were miracles done among you. Why? It's because of their believing, not because of their doing.

So the beginning is all about believing with faith. The middle, their current experience, believing with faith. What about the end? What about the goal? That takes us to verse 3, a key verse for us.

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

So if the goal of the Christian life is to know and enjoy God forever, if they started on that journey towards God by trusting in God's grace, he's then asking them the question, do you expect, if you started the race by grace, do you expect to finish, cross the finish line by some other means or method?

[11:55] That we would start by grace, but then at some point we would understand the gospel, we'd advance beyond that and we'd move back to law keeping?

And the answer, of course, is absolutely no. At no point in our Christian life is it anything other than resting on God's grace in our lives.

We start the Christian life, we grow in the Christian life, we finish the Christian life, not by our works, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Sometimes we can have the idea that the gospel, this good news of Jesus who died and rose again to give us salvation, that's like the ABCs, that's the basics.

And then once we've got that down, we kind of move on and we sort of figure out how to live a life that pleases God. And we can very easily fall into the idea that we are accomplishing, that we are performing.

And what Paul is saying, the gospel isn't the ABC, the gospel is the A to Z. It's the whole of the Christian life. It's marked by grace from beginning to end. And so we can see the problem in the church.

[13:04] They had foolishly forgotten that Jesus Christ crucified was everything for them. That faith in Jesus was what brought them every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.

It was because of their faith in Jesus that God's spirit was at work in their lives. They lost sight of that. And now they're thinking that they need to perform to be accepted.

So again, Paul loves them. When he calls them foolish, it's because he's distressed for them. And he desperately wants to call them back to trusting in Jesus.

To be allowing the gospel of grace to be at work in their lives, not trading that in for their own performance. The only time that I have ever been taken in by one of these scam phone calls, it's back in the early days, so I have an excuse.

There was a guy that phoned up claiming to be Mr. Microsoft. And he detected a problem in my machine. And so he needed to take over my computer and go inside in order to fix it up.

[14:23] He was going to upgrade it for me. But he kind of, I don't know how he knew, but he knew, apparently. With this upgrade, as I discovered, beware of people claiming to be Mr. Microsoft, this upgrade ended up absolutely wrecking my computer.

Had to spend a fortune trying to get it debugged because of the damage that this guy had done. Never ever, Paul says, trade in, upgrade from faith in Jesus alone.

If we add anything else, we're only bringing destruction to our faith. And so Paul wants to be really clear on that.

That we need to see that we never move beyond the gospel in all of our lives. What might that look like in our lives?

Let me, let's think through three R's together. The first one, run. Let's remember that if we want to stay in the course with the gospel of grace, we need to run quickly to Jesus in our failures.

[ 15 : 33 ] That we recognize that he has paid for my sins so I can be quick to confess against our natural inclination to hide away, to run away, to justify.

Because of what Jesus has done in that finished work, we can run quickly to him in our failures, in our sin. And we should be quick to run to him in our successes too.

Recognizing that all the good things that we have are a gift of God's grace. So we never find ourselves in that mindset where we're becoming proud and thinking, I've done that. That was on account of my good performance.

So we run to Jesus in good times and bad times. So we remember that these are ways that we can discover God's grace. We're also encouraged to re-examine constantly our own hearts.

What is it that we are truly trusting in? These were people who started and they were absolutely believing in Jesus, but now they're trusting in something other than Jesus. So we need to be honest with that.

[ 16 : 41 ] Am I trusting in Jesus Christ crucified or something else? What am I placing my hopes in?

What do I hope will save me, will provide for what I mean? Maybe if we find ourselves easily angry with other people, frustrated by others, embittered towards others, where perhaps the need for control has become something that's really important, that's like a saviour to us.

If I just had control over all these people and all these situations, then life would be great. Or if we find ourselves perhaps being crushed, if somebody ignores us or snubs us or doesn't respect us, then maybe we'll find that it's the approval of others that's our true centre, that we're drifting away from trusting in Jesus alone for our salvation and for that foundation for our lives.

So we need to be re-examining and tied up to that, just remembering, remembering all that Jesus has done and all that Jesus continues to do for his church.

Let me encourage Christian daydreaming. I don't know, where does your mind go when you find that it's got some free time? Instead of maybe going online or plugging in some music, let me encourage Christian daydreaming, meditation, to think about God's Word, to think about a verse, to think about an idea, to chew over it, to think how does this reveal more of God's character and God's love to me?

[ 18 : 22 ] How can I apply this truth to my life in a way that will help me to be more like Jesus? How will this truth help me to worship? You know, it's as we actively remember the gospel that will be led to greater joy and greater worship.

So Paul says, if your faith is in Jesus, you're never to move beyond the gospel of grace. And then he moves on in his argument, verses 6 to 9, to say to this church that when your faith is in Jesus, you're already part of God's family.

The way that you enter the family of God is by faith. And he needs to say this because there were false teachers around. And what they had been selling to the church here and other churches is that if they really wanted to be obedient, yes, they must trust in Jesus, but yes, they must also become Jewish.

Yes, they must also keep all the ceremonial diaphthal laws. They must get circumcised. All that kind of stuff if God were to accept them. So these guys, these false teachers, were falsely claiming Moses.

Now we can go back to Moses to tell you that you need to change to shift away from just trusting in Jesus. So Paul's response is genius really because he goes further back than Moses.

[ 19 : 52 ] He takes them on a lesson of Old Testament history. He takes them right back to Abraham, to the father of faith. And he does that so as to say, Abraham agrees with me on the way that we enter the kingdom of God.

And he does that by immediately in verse 6, quoting from Genesis 15. Consider Abraham, then we've got a quote from Genesis 15. He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So let's very briefly fill in the context what's happened in Genesis 12. In Genesis 12, God called Abraham and made rich promises to him.

And then in Genesis 15, God is then going to reaffirm those covenant promises to Abraham. Central to that promise is the fact that Abraham was to have a child, to have descendants, to become a great nation.

But when we find Abraham here in Genesis 15, he's 90 years old and he's childless. And so there's a real point of tension. Will this covenant promise be fulfilled?

[ 21 : 10 ] So when God reaffirms that promise to Abraham, the wonderful thing about him, what makes him the father of faith, is that Abraham believes. He trusts in God's word of promise, even when he doesn't yet have a child.

And the important thing for Paul's argument is, when did this happen? When was this covenant promise affirmed to Abraham? And when did Abraham respond in faith?

And we discover that it's some 430 years before the law was given. So Paul is saying the law couldn't have been the basis for Abraham's hope because there was no law.

Couldn't have been about circumcision because he doesn't have that yet. So Abraham then is used by Paul to be the precedent. Verse 7, Understand then that those who believe are children of Abraham.

This isn't about ethnicity. This is about believing in God's promise. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham.

[ 22 : 21 ] All nations will be blessed through you. So anyone and everyone who's in God's family, there is only one criteria, and that's to trust in God's promise, to trust with faith.

Verse 9, And so those who have faith are blessed, along with Abraham, the man of faith, to know God's blessing, to know God's love and goodness and joy in your life, to live in covenant relationship with him, to enjoy knowing him now and forever.

How do we get to that point? Same way as Abraham did. By believing with faith. Believing in God's word of promise. And as he says that, that brings us back to verse 1.

That takes us back to our big neon sign of Jesus Christ crucified. Because that is God's word of promise to us. That we are invited to believe that Jesus is crucified for me, for my sins, becoming my substitute, so that by faith in him, I might be welcomed by God, that I might know the promise of forgiveness.

The promise that even although I am sinful, I can be credited as righteous. That God can declare us righteous because our hope is in Jesus and the perfect righteousness of Jesus has been credited to our account.

[ 23 : 58 ] And that all comes by having faith in God's grace towards us in sending Jesus to be Savior. So there's only one way in. Some of us, we've moved into new accommodation and we're getting the hang of which keys to use.

Some of us have got lots of security points so maybe to get into our house, there's two or three doors that we need to unlock. The false teachers were trying to say there's another way into the kingdom.

It's not about Jesus. It's about Jesus and the law. And what Paul is saying, there is only one door. There's only one key. It's Jesus.

It's faith in Jesus alone. So we enter by faith. To be in God's family, we trust in Jesus and what he's done for us.

That's important for the folks in Galatia and it's important for us too. There are implications for this when we think about how that plays out. In terms of family equality, there's no two-tier Christianity.

[ 25 : 08 ] In those days, it's not, well, the Jewish Christians are up here and the Gentile Christians are down here. Faith is the only criteria for belonging to God and being in his family. Therefore, we don't get to, we should not judge or exclude someone because of any number of factors, because of their past or because of their bank balance or because of their church affiliation or because of their standard of education.

There is family equality because we all enter the same way by faith in Jesus and what he's done for us. It's also a reminder that because we're in the family, we have family access to God our Father. Let me plug for a moment. There's a book out there for the Women's Book Club written by Megan Hill called Praying Together. It's an excellent book. Whether you can join the book club or not, I would encourage you to read it.

Her first chapter was really helpful on the foundations of prayer and how the foundation for our praying is based on the relationship that we've been brought into with the Trinity, that we can call God Father, that we pray through the Son, that we pray with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And so we have this amazing access to God our Father because of our faith in Jesus. And we're also, when we trust in Jesus, we're part of God's family here on earth.

[ 26 : 45 ] And so we have access to the wonderful gift of fellowship with brothers and sisters, to know love and encouragement and help and comfort from one another.

And there's also a reminder when we think about the story of Abraham, that there's this story of family faith, that there are promises and there are truths that are passed down from generation to generation.

So let me just, for a minute or two, let's think for our parents here, what message are we conveying to our children? If we were to probe really deep in our hearts, what are the hopes that we have for our children?

You know, instinctively, we want them to be good citizens. We want them to be successful. We want them to be healthy and to be happy, of course. But beyond that, as Christian parents, is our real heart for them that they would be loving Jesus, that they would be truly devoted to him, that they'd be walking by faith and not by sight, that we'd be investing in them, spiritually preparing them for the challenges that will undoubtedly come in a world that seems to be growing increasingly hostile.

It's not just for ourselves, it's for our families also. So Paul says that if you have faith in Jesus, you're part of God's family.

[ 28 : 18 ] And then the last thing to look at in these closing verses is that if your faith is in Jesus, you have true freedom. So here, remember, this is Paul calling Christians back, come back to trusting in Jesus alone, trusting in Jesus, finished work on the cross, trust in the gospel of grace.

And to make clear the importance of that, he gives a really powerful comparison. What is the way to freedom? What is the way to use the language in this section?

What's the way to escaping God's curse on sin? What is the way to escape God's curse on law-breaking? Positively, how can we be declared to be righteous and acceptable to God?

And there are two options that Paul explores. One, which you'll see, utterly fails us if we trust in it. Option one is, essentially, place all your trust in your ability to keep the law.

John Stott, when he talks about this, calls it the man-on-the-street theology. Asks someone, why should God let you into heaven? And, well, I've been a good neighbor and I'm honest at my job.

[ 29 : 37 ] I give to charity. All those kinds of things. The hope that we can be good enough for God to welcome us into heaven. Here's where Paul is going.

Is this a reliable approach? If we want to know and enjoy God, is this a way of access to God? And there's very clear ways in which Paul says, absolutely not.

Verse 12, the law is not based on faith. On the contrary, the man who does these things will live by them. So, here's what he's saying there as he quotes from Leviticus.

To live by the law is to have our verdict determined by how well we obey the law. If we want to put our trust in our ability to please God, then there is a standard that we need to reach.

There is a crisis created by that kind of thinking. Because in verse 10, again, quoting from the Old Testament, quoting from Deuteronomy, 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.

[ 30 : 53 ] Do you see the standard that God is looking for? If we want to say, I'm going to trust in my ability to keep the law, to get to heaven, then the Bible says that needs to be absolute perfection.

That's the standard. Continue to do everything. So theoretically, a person could know blessing this way if we could from birth to death love God and love others perfectly.

If all of our words and actions and thoughts and motives and impulses were perfect, if we never fail, if we always succeed, perfect obedience from beginning to end, then yes, theoretically, we could know that is a way to go.

But when we know ourselves, we know that to be pulled towards keeping the law for our acceptance is doomed to failure.

As Paul says, to do that is to go under the curse as a lawbreaker. Because we just can't live that way.

[ 32 : 08 ] It is impossible for us. The only person who's ever lived a perfect life is Jesus. So we're invited to trust in his perfect record, not try and gain our own because it's impossible.

And what we discover is that if we do try and save ourselves that way, if we do think that being in the kingdom or getting into the kingdom is about keeping God's law and trying to be perfect, then we'll become terribly anxious and terribly insecure.

We'll be comparing and competing and something's feeling great and something's feeling terribly and we'll find that instead of the true freedom that's offered in the gospel, we'll find ourselves

enslaved, never able to have assurance that we know God and that God will accept this in the end. And so again, we need to return to that neon sign, to Jesus Christ crucified. That's where Paul goes again to remember what happened there on the cross to see why it matters so much.

So option one is trust in our law keeping. Option two is trust in Jesus for redemption, for freedom. Verse 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

[ 33 : 27 ] For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. So in the Old Testament, to be hung on a tree was a sign, a symbol of being under the curse of God.

And so the New Testament writers, they understand that what's happening on the cross is Jesus is willingly going under God's curse. He's willingly taking the curse that you and I deserve for our law breaking.

He, the perfect one, stands in our place paying that price to free us, to give us new life. He does that in the gospel and it's all about grace.

He does it in love and mercy towards us. He becomes a curse for us. That for there is the idea of substitution.

Jesus becomes sin for us. He takes our sin. He takes our punishment that our sin deserves. So again, that we might be forgiven, that we might be declared to be righteous by trusting in Him alone.

[ 34 : 38 ] And when we see that everything about our salvation hangs on what Jesus did as He hung on the cross, then we understand we have a security that we can never lose if our faith is in Him.

So we remember, we love, we value the gospel of grace. So Paul again says, don't give in to the foolishness of laying it aside to go back to law.

And that's really how he concludes. He concludes in verse 14 saying, remember you have everything when you have Jesus. You know, say by faith in Jesus you're redeemed.

By faith in Jesus you know blessing in God's family by faith. By faith in Jesus you've received the promised Holy Spirit.

Maybe you've had that experience when you're traveling especially probably on country roads where you're not entirely sure where you're going and you take a fork in the road and you've gone a few miles and you're wondering is this the right way to go?

[ 35 : 51 ] Am I going to find that I have to turn around because I've lost my bearings? And sometimes you're just desperate for a road sign and you don't see it and you don't see it and you don't see it and the minutes are ticking by. It would be quite unsettling to lose those signs if we don't know if we're going in the way direction.

So what Paul does for them and for us is he brings to us this great big sign to place before our eyes Jesus Christ has been crucified for you.

He has done everything for your salvation. Our response is to receive by faith. So here's an encouragement to get on the road of God's grace if you're not there already to be trusting in Jesus to stay on the road of God's grace and to never lose sight of that road sign Jesus Christ crucified as we journey together with him.

Him and He knows