

Parson to Person
(Galatians 3 – Part 2)
“God Needs No Help”

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of the faith are sons of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:1–7).

Two Bold Points

To the Romans Paul made two very bold (and distinct) statements as additional commentary to the things written here in Galatians.

To the Romans Paul wrote, *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Romans 4:4–5).*

Two distinct things should be noted: the first being that communicated in verse 4 and the second in verse 5.

1) Verse 4 reads, *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”*

Those who believe they must “work” in order to earn grace, front-load the Gospel, and thus suggest God owes them something.

Secondly, those who believe they must “work” in order to remunerate grace, back-load the Gospel and thus suggest they owe God for the salvation granted. These two facts help define Paul’s expression, *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt”* (vs. 4).

Thoughts on Grace:

- 1) In the Christian expression, grace is embodied in the Godhead and manifested in Jesus Himself.
- 2) Jesus is grace personified.
- 3) Grace is unmerited.
- 4) Grace cannot be earned or it is no longer grace.
- 5) Grace is the power of God which enables men to believe, to live, and to love.
- 6) Grace is manifest in the favor of God granting forgiveness of sins, redemption, and justification.
- 7) Grace is manifest in divine selection (election), separation from this fallen world (sanctification), and exaltation to the heavenly places in Christ (glorification).
- 8) The recipient of grace cannot be indebted to God for it, otherwise it would be merited in reparation.
- 9) Reparation suggests that God has been harmed, damaged, suffered loss, or diminished by the dispensing of grace. Reimbursement implies debt.
- 10) Grace cannot be diminished. It is the all-encompassing manifestation of God and His work.
- 11) Grace cannot be enhanced as that would indicate some deficit in grace itself—in God Himself.
- 12) If grace is capable of or in any way in need of enhancement, we would be forced to conclude that God has need and that His work was, may be, or is imperfect.

- 13) Any human act designed to merit grace, maintain grace, or enhance grace is an assault on both the person and work of God. Therefore, seeking meritorious favor is to blaspheme God Himself.

For centuries, men have struggled with the true definition and glory of grace. May we be among those who no longer struggle or strive—but only receive.

Salvation is the free gift of God, by grace, through faith. Any other view suggests we owe God for grace and are in debt to Him or, we work for grace, and therefore, God is in debt to us. Neither are true!

Fallen from Grace?

Paul taught the Galatians, *“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:4). “Falling from grace” is not as some suggest.

Some believe that falling from grace is the loss of salvation. They are wrong! “Falling from grace” is to “fall off” or “fall down” from the high and lofty position in grace one receives from God alone—apart from work(s). We are placed on the “solid rock” of grace—by faith alone. Therefore, anything we must do to *receive* grace is to fall from that “rock”—the *rest* we have in Jesus. Moreover, anything we must do to *maintain* that rest is likewise a “fall.” Diminishing the work of God, accomplished in Christ, on our behalf is a “fall” indeed! God forbid that we should take from or declare insufficient the work of Christ.

Let us remember, *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness”* (vs. 6).

Righteousness was imputed to Abraham apart from works—

any work. Moreover, as startling as it may seem to many, Paul wrote, “*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness*” (vs. 5). Therefore, working to earn grace and/or maintain grace is equally offensive to God. It is a disregard for the sufferings of Christ and mercy of God.

Does Not Work

2) Verse 5 reads: “*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*”

“*Does not work*” should be kept in contrast to “did not work.” “*Does not*” should be viewed in present tense while “did not” would imply a past action.

We have already addressed front-loading the Gospel. Front-loading is the *supposed* prerequisite work thought to be needed in order to earn one’s “right” to grace. This is error indeed! In contrast is back-loading the Gospel. Back-loading refers to the *supposed* work one must do in order to *maintain* the grace previously given.

Those who believe a truly regenerated believer can forfeit or lose the salvation given by grace through faith alone back-load the Gospel—suggesting that one must “do” something to maintain the salvation previously given. For example, were someone to teach or believe that he or she must work *for* God (in whatever form), or stop “sinning” (in whatever form), in order to maintain their placement on the “solid rock” of grace, they error. Salvation from top to bottom, from start to finish, is the work of God—granted by grace through faith alone. We cannot, have not, and will not add to the work of God by work(s)—any work(s)—good or bad!

Inasmuch as Abraham was not regenerated as we in the Church Age experience, Paul nonetheless used him as an example of imputed righteousness “by faith alone”—even when “falling short”

of perfect obedience.

Not License to Sin

Some may argue that teaching or believing the Gospel of Grace is a license to sin and/or apathetic living. However, they are wrong! Grace is not a license to sin nor a pathway to apathy. Grace correctly understood creates a love and appreciation for the sufferings of Christ on our behalf and a deepening desire to live righteously. I have often said, “I am far more motivated to live righteously knowing that my sin(s) added to the sufferings of Christ than by some threat of future condemnatory judgment.” As believers we are motivated by love. We are motivated by grace. Moreover, as born again, we are transformed from within by the power of the Holy Spirit—who “causes” us to live righteously in Christ—and see the fruit of His work in us (see Ezekiel 36:27 and Ephesians 2:8–10).

“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (vs. 5).

The answer is obvious. The promised Spirit birth was the result of the faith in Jesus—not by keeping the Law. Therefore, *“just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’”* (vs. 6), likewise all of us who believe, God declares righteous—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as declared in the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone!

I love you all,
Pastor Paul