

“Strike 1, you’re out...”

*Galatians 3:10-29*

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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**Galatians 3:10-29** *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

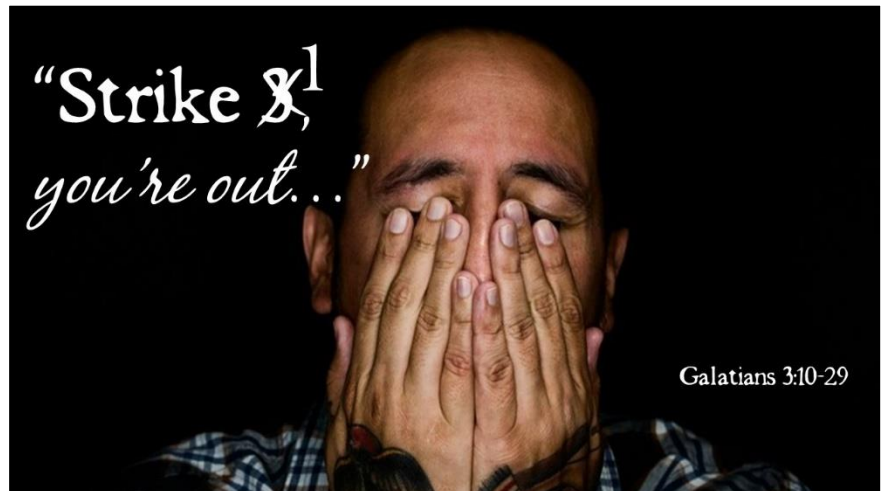
*12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though [it is] only a man's covenant, yet [if it is] confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. 17 And this I say, [that] the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance [is] of the law, [it is] no longer of promise; but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise. 19 What purpose then [does] the law [serve]? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator does not [mediate] for one [only], but God is one. 21 [Is] the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you [are] Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

### 3:10-11

Indeed, few would argue that the most damning aspect of the law is that within it is virtually no “wobble room,” no latitude, no margin, no leeway. **One** mistake...**one** shortcoming...**one** tiny little sin and scripture, emphatically...*and yes, incredulously*, declares you guilty of all sins...of breaking **all the rules**.

As it was for Abraham, so it is for us today. If we try to stand right with God by following the rules and regulations of the Old Testament Law, or yet even if we try the same through following a ‘new’ law of denominational hoops, we would be condemned by merely one error, one slip-up. It really makes no difference what rule and obedience you are trying to hold up as a passing grade. Moreover, any attempt to earn such a standing under one’s own efforts, is a slam upon Christ and the Cross. It all is contrary to God’s plan of redemption by grace! We must remember that God demands nothing less than “perfection.” One would think that such would be the end of this fight, but ironically it is not.

Indeed there are those who attempt the same in the reverse. They think because they don’t follow the law but they believe **of** Christ, they are saved. You may be thinking, “Whoa there Pastor, that’s what the Bible says!”



No it doesn't, no matter how much we might try to make it say that. It says "believe *in* me, and thou shalt be saved." And I cannot overemphasize the vast difference between "*in* me" and "*of* me!"

The scripture is clear: any "I made this" attempt to render oneself right with God is just as much a blasphemy as the stance of depending upon the Old Testament laws to do so. Believing *of* Jesus is *my* work. Believing *in* Jesus is acknowledging *His* work. Believing *in* is not just *acknowledging* His words but moreover *trusting* and moreover *acting* in them!

If you reject parts of the Bible, you are rejecting His words and therefore, ultimately rejecting His plan of salvation which encompasses those written words. If this is you, you can't be saved, because you do not believe *in* Jesus, you just believe *of* Him and *your* works and *your* gospel design. You are trusting in your position, your interpretation, your stance, and therefore you are "out in the cold."

In **Isaiah 55:11** God says "It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it." In **Isaiah 40:8** He says "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." **Matthew 24:35** says "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."

If you think believing *of* Jesus makes you saved, then you are believing in your work to make you righteous. Believing in Jesus is not a "work," it's a surrender to Jesus...lock, stock, and barrel: all He is, all He said, all He did. Believing *in* Jesus is acknowledging that all I ever will be and do is **all Him**.

We are saved "by grace through faith." Scripture *also* says "The 'just shall **live** by *that* faith' in Christ." Meaning the encompassing of all He said and all He did, His work and His words, all of it...*everything*. However, it doesn't say 'because I live by that faith I will be just.' But rather if I *AM justified, I WILL live by faith!*

### **3:12-13**

If I decide that the path to redemption is through my efforts and works, if I try to go the route of "rules and regulations, good deeds and religious adherence" then I am required by the very design of the law to follow *every single point*. I have to dot every "i" and cross every "t" or I fail in it all. It is like defusing a nuclear bomb...one small error and it's all over completely.

Jesus however took upon Himself our curse of sin, and now the answer lies solely in Him and on Him. There can be no in between, no half way, no "hedging your bet." It's all Jesus, or it's no Jesus at all. That can be kinda scary huh? Letting go of the rope and freefalling...trusting an unseen Savior to catch you before you hit the ground! No parachute, no safety harness, no back up plan...He catches us or 'we are dead.'

The Old King James says He was made a curse for us, which is actually a better translation. Because God essentially made Him be our stand-in. Not just to *save* us, but to take the hit for us. To receive the scorn and contempt, the punishment and the pain, the execution, the death. God "gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes *in* Him, will have eternal life."

### **3:14**

Ahhh...and there it is. The tie that brings the Old Testament and the New together for us all. The blessing of Abraham coming upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.

So what's the bottom line for us today in all of this? It is this: **No matter how good you think you are, you are not good enough to stand in heaven.** Whatever good things you do, you cannot do enough of them. No matter how holy and spiritual you might be, it will never be enough to make you right in the sight of God.

You just simply can never be right with God outside of salvation by Christ. Moreover, you can really never walk any kind of a righteous life anyway without the Holy Spirit, which again is only available through Christ.

Abraham had faith in a coming redeemer. We have faith in that same redeemer having come and finished His work. The last word is "Do you believe *in* Jesus?" Have you "*let go of the rope*" or is your belief just a theory?

### 3:15

Paul begins with a gentle call, "*brothers...hear what I'm saying to you...*" He goes on to remind the readers that the agreement that God made was done, the contract had already been signed and delivered. We understand the contractual principle even in our present business world. And if *man's* contracts are binding, how much more are we bound to a contract with the Creator?

The problem is that a newer contract cannot usurp and upend an *earlier* contract. Therefore the covenant of the law with Moses would not be able to set aside the previous covenant of justification through faith made to Abraham 400 years earlier! The contract with Abraham was sealed with animal blood (Gen 15), and ultimately completed through the blood of Jesus Christ. The cross was the completion of the covenant to Abraham. The covenant of "I will bless you, just because I love you."

### 3:16

God told Abraham that He would bless Him and his "seed." This is a perfect example of the fact that details do indeed matter! For the Jewish nation thought he meant "and his **seeds**" which they took to mean them! Nope. It was "seed," ...*singular*...just one. God was referring to just one of his seeds, one which was way out there in the future at that point. The 'one' he was speaking of was of course the "seed" Jesus. He would be the "deal closer." The promises of God to mankind would not come through the Jewish nation, but through just one "seed": just Jesus.

### 3:17-18

God made a promise through Abraham that anyone who wanted to, could be blessed through Him and his 'seed' Jesus Christ. The law's of Moses was not and could not override a "legal agreement" that was made 430 years before. Neither could the "laws" of this denomination and that church, not "this guy's" interpretation, or that pastor's addendums. If any of it is altered by even a comma, then God is a liar, and we are all lost. But if the promise still stands, *and we are betting everything on that fact*, then we are immanently blessed in Jesus and *only in Jesus*.

Again...I understand that it is hard to "let go of the rope." So much riding on this...no room for error or mistake! Ironically, Abraham was in the same boat! For he was being asked to believe this promise when he had no children and by all accounts was physically just never going to! He couldn't comprehend how it was going to happen. He didn't understand how it was going to work. Abraham, just like you and I, had to **surrender**. He had to believe in God. He had to "jump..." He answered the God he believed *of*, but moreover he ultimately put his trust in a God he believed **IN**. And like us, when he did, he was indeed blessed!

Now there were those who had come into the church in Galatia that were messing with the people's heads. Everything had been fine, the people had been growing under the umbrella of grace, and the church itself had grown in number. These things always cause the jealous attention of those on the outside who seek that success but fail to have it. Sadly, even those who are wearing the Christian mantle from other fellowships do this. So

they, like so many who have followed, began to mess with the church there attempting to gain power and clout where they had none.

These trouble makers were essentially telling the people that unless they lived like *they* lived...which in this case was the 'jumping through the hoops' of old school Judaism, then they weren't really saved. They had to first follow all the rules and rituals, and *then* follow Christ if they wanted to be 'in.' Today there are so many who will try to tell to tell you the same. It's the old rules or maybe some new rules...baptism, church membership, confirmation, speaking in tongues, good works, financial giving, etc. These things may on various levels have some value, but not in making us more or less saved, or to make Jesus love us more.

The problem here is that we often confuse the *fruit of salvation* with the *key to salvation*! And it works both ways. Some will say that good works, holy living, church participation, serving, giving and being discipled is mandatory to being saved. That's a "Jesus plus" message and it's a lie. Certainly we have seen the evidence first hand, that fulfilling all of those things does in no way prove that a person loves Jesus!

But others will be quick to shoot down any emphasis of those same issues saying "Hey! That stuff is not a consideration because I am saved by grace!" Yes you are indeed correct, but all that stuff actually is evidence of a born again life as manifest proof that we *are* saved! To reject that premise is to render God and His salvation capable of changing a person's *position*, but apparently powerless to affect a person's passions and lifestyle. And sadly, just *knowing* that motivates a lot of folks to fake it...to "go through the motions" because they don't want anyone to know the truth...maybe not even themselves. We are quite good at lying to ourselves.

### 3:19

NLT: "*Well then, why was the law given? It was given to show people how guilty they are. But this system of law was to last only until the coming of the child to whom God's promise was made.*"

So if it genuinely can't be followed, what is the point of the existence of the law then? The law was *and is* to quantify in the best human terms possible, just what the standard of holiness is for which to be permitted to approach our Creator. It was not written with any hopes that anyone would actually be able to follow it except for one, and that was Christ alone. But no one would be able to say "Hey, I just didn't understand what I was supposed to do to be right with God!" We would be...we are then, "without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

Jesus however was the one individual that fulfilled the law *to the letter*, and then, as the only perfect and holy individual to ever walk this earth, the only one who could actually walk right into the heavenly 'oval office,' He took upon Himself the guilt and stain for our sin, our guilt, and received our punishment so we could go free. This act is what is known as "substitutionary atonement." Essentially that means He paid, so we don't have to. But that person could not have been just anyone. It took an individual perfect and unspotted by sin, so the playing field just got real small!

The law was not given as a supplement to God's promise of grace to Abraham and to us. It was not given as a replacement of such either. It was rather given to show us how deep we were in our inability to dig out and that we needed to surrender to that plan of grace. It seems we had to be proved that there was no other way to get there under our own doing! The law was given for such a task, and was to culminate in the arrival of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of God's grace and His plan.

### 3:20

A mediator, as we understand such, acts to negotiate and intercede between at least two individuals. But God cut this deal with Abraham on His own. Abraham had nothing to do with it, he just lived it out. Moses however,

was indeed a human mediator between God and Israel when the law arrived; he stood in the breach until Jesus arrived.

God made an unconditional arrangement with Man when He made a promise to Abraham. He didn't need a mediator. It was a 'one-way promise.' With the law, there had to be obedience, a satisfaction of the agreement on our part to bring about fulfillment. But we couldn't, not then, not ever. But the arrangement God made with Abraham was a promise...it didn't need any mediator nor did there need to be anything from us to see it come to pass. God's promise to Abraham was the promise of grace and love, *no matter what*.

### 3:21-23

So why send the law if everything was already set? Didn't its arrival just muddy the pool? It was needed because of the 'transgressions by man.' (Note vs. 19) Mankind refused God's grace and wanted both sin and God. If they wanted to be right with God at all, they innately wanted to get right with God themselves. It's a tendency that still plagues man today. It is was and is an unmitigated failure on our part.

God then gave hundreds of years for us to come to the end of ourselves on this matter. That's what the law did. That's why it's still in effect for those who choose to reject Christ and His salvation of grace. We were given the "standard of God," ...what it would take for us to achieve "enlightenment" and righteousness before our Creator. All we had to do was step up and fulfill it. But of course, we failed.

Many came to understand the fact that it was hopeless, and when Jesus came and offered us salvation, we took it! Those who would believe in Jesus, that He fulfilled the law for us and made us right, we are given true standing with God. Sadly, many still are attempting the 'old path.' The law was not *contrary* to God's promise of grace. In fact, it came to prove that grace was mandatory.

### 3:24

The law did what it was designed to do. To be our teacher. To show us that we are helpless to ever get right with God on our own. No matter what we do, and ever try to be on our own account, we can never alone achieve the necessary righteousness to be square with God.

The law did however teach humanity about the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. It was our 'school-teacher,' and we are the immature little children. **Can you accept that?** If you can, you are half way home. If you can't, then you are doomed to just keep trying on your own to get through this life and prepare yourself to meet your maker. Certainly plenty of folks do not accept this. In fact, untold millions are in that camp, and billions have died over hundreds of years, all trying through their own efforts. What amazes me...with that evidence, is that people just keep trying!

Furthermore, no one has to wait until death to see the fruitlessness of such an endeavor. Just look around gang, the papers and the evening news are full of examples. It's a sad display of man's pride and determined resolve to go it alone. What a disaster! Drug addiction, infidelity, divorce, depression, suicide, crimes and imprisonment, wars, and just overall emptiness. Yet untold millions are standing in line today to be the next guy to give it another shot.

### 3:25-26

Through it all we have access to the key. We have a way out of this spiral! We don't have to live under the 'tutor' anymore. The choice, of course, is ours. If we are willing, we are able to be true 'sons of God.' But it only happens through faith in Christ. It's not a premise or a mere ideal. For thousands of years now it's been proven millions of times over. That was the point of it all, you see. We are truly without excuse.

Indeed we must know today that there is no blindness as dark as men's pride. It is that pride that will keep us from such an acknowledgment. It is pride that keeps us from Christ...pride that destroys our relationships and our testimony, pride that shouts the reality of our unchanged hearts despite our church participation, and it will be pride that will ultimately doom us just like all the rest before us.

You can argue forever, but the bottom line is that death is waiting for all of us. No one has managed to figure a way out of that yet. How is your poker face on that one? How's your nerve when you look at *that one* face-to-face? Because you know you don't have the cards. They are all on the table and you don't get any more. So what's it going to be? Jesus, *or do you feel you can beat the odds?* Remember the evening news and the newspapers.

### **3:27**

Now don't get the wrong idea about this verse. Baptism doesn't save you, nor does it change your position with God. Paul is calling on us to "put on Christ." Soldiers identify and state their allegiance to their nation and their cause by putting on the uniform. A believer identifies himself or herself with Christ by "putting on Christ." Note that this is not just about salvation, but the actual *living out of Christ* in one's public life.

One way we do that is the public acknowledgment of baptism. You see, there are no 'secret Christians' when you testify before all that you have committed yourself to one love; *the love of Jesus Christ*. While baptism doesn't **make us** anything we weren't before we got dunked, it does however do two things: **One**, it is an issue of obedience. Act 2:38 says "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...*" And **two**, baptism is a testimony to all of your brethren and all of the heavens that you now stand with Christ. 1Peter 3:21 (NLT) "*And this is a picture of baptism, which now saves you by the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from a clean conscience.*"

### **3:28-29**

Here is the promise of God that awaits us on the other side. No more are there issues that separate us. In Christ we are all one. We become the true "community of faith." But note that this promise is for those who are *in* Christ, those who have "*put Him on.*"

Perhaps this is the simplest description of the difference between those who want Jesus to keep them out of hell, and those who want Jesus as Lord. Those who sit in the pews each week, and those who have 'thrown their hat into the ring' and are actually a part of the active community of believers: I.E. *those who have "put on Jesus."* Heirs of the promises of God? I say 'amen' to that! Indeed we have lived in living testimony of that fact around here...