

A Dangerous Exchange

You foolish Galatians! . . . Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? (Galatians 3:1-2).

Scripture: Galatians 3:1-5

Song: “Nothing but the Blood”

Reality television often paints an overly optimistic picture of the profit potential involved in buying abandoned storage units. Buyers purchase units without knowing their contents until after the sale is complete. While some buyers do find commercial treasures, others experience the disappointment of having exchanged valuable currency for worthless goods. The apostle Paul warned the Galatian church not to make a far more dangerous trade: exchanging the gospel of grace for the law, which cannot save.

False teachers tried to convince the believers that they could not truly be saved without adding works to their faith in Christ’s sacrifice. Paul didn’t mince words when the gospel and the spiritual health of a beloved congregation were at stake. His “You foolish Galatians!” statement flowed from his steadfast desire to stop them from being led away from the truth that salvation is by grace through faith alone!

It’s common to wrestle with doubts, to wonder whether we’ve received enough “brownie points.” The gospel message is counterintuitive to our natural desire to earn our salvation. Thankfully, God the Father sent the Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We are reconciled to God by grace through faith in Jesus.

Father, help me hold fast to Your message of reconciliation. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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 May 9–15. **Maureen Fowler** lives with her family and an orange tabby cat.

Family Resemblance

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7).

Scripture: Galatians 3:6-17

Song: “Sometimes by Step”

After I gave birth to my youngest child, comments about her resemblance to me or to my husband made me chuckle. My friends and relatives declared that she looked just like me. My husband’s family and friends, however, noted my child’s uncanny resemblance to her father. But family resemblances don’t always involve genetics.

Today’s passage reminds us that true children of Abraham resemble him by following after his faith. In the early church, some were trying to convince the faithful that to be considered “children of Abraham,” they needed to believe in Christ *and* practice ceremonial rituals associated with Jewish law. The apostle Paul was alarmed at this and wrote to set the record straight. At one time Paul himself had believed that peace with God was rooted in the strict practice of religious law and one’s status as a literal descendant of Abraham. However, once he experienced a genuine conversion to Christianity, he understood that salvation does not come by the law, but by grace through faith.

Abraham, the man known as a spiritual father figure to those who believe, was far from perfect. However, he put his faith in the God who is worthy of trust—and he was saved. Those who trust in Christ alone for their salvation are the true children of Abraham. Are you trusting God as Abraham did?

Father, thank You for the example of Abraham’s faith. Help me to trust my present and future to You, the God who saves. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Blessing and Power

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:2-3).

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:2-4

Song: “More Love, More Power”

Emily needed to buy a small canvas, brushes, and some oil paints. While clearing out a corner of the garage, however, she found a stash of art supplies she’d completely forgotten about! Everything she needed was there. In our Christian walk, we may experience something similar. We may forget that God has already given us all that we need to survive and thrive in a fallen world.

The apostle Peter wanted believers to experience abundant grace and peace “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” He also told them that they already had all the divine help they needed to live a godly life. God is not stingy about revealing himself to His people. Believers gain knowledge of God through studying His inspired Word, spending time enjoying creation, and engaging in the privilege of prayer.

The more a Christian knows about God, the more he or she sees and remembers that God’s grace and power are sufficient for daily life. The early church needed God’s grace, peace, and power—and so do we! What circumstance are you facing for which you can seek and receive the grace, strength, and peace from God that you need today?

Father, thank You for providing everything I need for life and godliness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The God Who Pursues

“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord” (Hosea 2:19-20).

Scripture: Hosea 2:16-23

Song: “Reckless Love”

Most people would not consciously pursue a serious relationship with someone whose background included serial unfaithfulness. Yet God did precisely that with the nation of Israel. Israel had witnessed God’s deliverance and power but fell into idolatry over and over. The people would suffer for it and cry out to God before repeating the cycle again. God, however, never stopped loving Israel. The story of God’s relentless pursuit of His beloved reminds us that God knows all our flaws and loves us anyway.

The book of Hosea uses the language of betrothal and marriage in discussing God’s relationship to His people. The Lord said there would come a day when He would be called Israel’s husband. God reached out to Israel despite the people’s unfaithfulness and promised to do for them what they could not do for themselves: bring them into the peace and safety and provision of a covenant relationship with himself. Does this sound familiar?

All men and women are lost apart from God’s saving grace. God is omniscient and knows exactly how bad we are and how faithless we can be. He reaches out to us anyway. The same God who pursued Israel sent Jesus to sacrifice himself for us. He is faithful.

Father, I am amazed that You chose me before the foundation of the world. Help me walk with You faithfully. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Firm Foundations

“As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock” (Luke 6:47-48).

Scripture: Luke 6:45-49

Song: “How Firm a Foundation”

Throughout His Word, God reveals many names and titles that describe who He is and what He is like. These names are remarkable and powerful, reassuring and comforting. They disclose His character, attributes, and heart. And for us as God’s children, these names serve as a steadying defense against the waves of bewilderment that can accompany our unexpected trials. One of our Lord’s names is Rock (Psalm 18:31).

Today’s passage reminds us that unshakable faith is built on a foundation of faithfully trusting and following Christ, our solid rock. Jesus didn’t say *if* but *when* the torrent struck, and it came against *both* houses. However, only the house with its foundation dug deep and built on the rock survived the storm.

No one escapes the inevitable difficulties of living in a fallen world. Trials and hardship will come, even to those who are following Christ faithfully. Building our faith and lives on Christ and His Word gives us strength for living—strength that won’t fail no matter what torrents may come against our “house.”

Father, I want to both hear and obey Your Word, especially when I’m tempted to take an easier path. Help me recognize and repair any cracks in the foundation of my faith. In Jesus name, amen.

What's in a Name?

“No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you” (Genesis 17:5-6).

Scripture: Genesis 17:1-8

Song: “There’s Just Something About That Name”

Juliet, one of Shakespeare’s most famous characters, once asked, “What’s in a name?” The answer is that it depends on the origin of the name. God appeared to Abram and changed his name to Abraham when the patriarch was 99 years old. Although this must have seemed strange to Abraham, he trusted the God who had proven himself trustworthy.

The meaning of person’s name carried a great deal of cultural significance in the time of the patriarchs. It must have been awkward for the childless Abram to introduce himself for so many years according to his name’s meaning: “exalted father.” Then when Abraham was father to just one son, Ishmael, he bore his new name that meant “father of a multitude.”

This name change ultimately reflected Abraham’s future reality, both literally and symbolically. Abraham did have countless physical descendants and also is a spiritual father to multitudes of believers who identify with his faith. God’s actions in Abraham’s life were purposeful, just as they are in our lives. While we don’t know all the details of God’s plans for us, we can rely on His faithful character.

Father, I don’t understand why You have allowed certain circumstances in my life, but I know that I can trust Your purpose in them. Help me remember Your faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Promise and the Law

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. . . . So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:21, 24).

Scripture: Galatians 3:18-29

Song: “The Ten Commandments”

Even nonreligious people will sometimes acknowledge the wisdom and cultural impact of the Ten Commandments. The world is certainly a better place when people understand there is a moral law that prohibits murder, theft, and adultery. Some wonder what the purpose of the law is—isn't it unnecessary if we can't use it to work our way to salvation? Today's passage reminds us that the gospel and the law are allies, not enemies.

People have a fallen nature and could never stand on personal merit before a holy God. In fact, without God's help humanity doesn't even see its need for redemption. The law was always impossible to keep perfectly, but it helped people understand their sinful condition and need for reconciliation with God. It also provided a picture of the coming promised Savior.

Abraham believed God, and it was “credited to him as righteousness” long before the law was given (Genesis 15:6). Therefore, salvation was always by grace through faith. God used the law to show man his sinful condition. Then Jesus, the promised Savior, fulfilled the law and freed us from our sin-debt by His death, burial, and resurrection.

Father, thank You for sending Jesus, for making a way for fallen man to be reconciled to You. In Jesus' name, amen.