The Spirit Rhythm

week 04
Faith from Start to Finish
Galatians 3:1-9

opening prayer (2 min)

Father, thank You that Jesus paid the full price for our freedom and left nothing for us to pay. Tonight, remind us of the message of the cross. Show us where we are trying to finish in our own strength what You began by Your Spirit, and lead us to trust You more than when we first believed. Amen.

highlights (13 min)

Big Idea: Faith in Christ isn't just how we begin—it's how we continue and how we finish.

opening reflection

- Have you ever tried to pay for something someone else had already covered? How did it feel to hear, "It's all paid"?
- Do you remember the first moments of your faith? What was God doing in your life then?

Bridge Statement: Freedom always costs. More than a million Americans have died in wartime service, and we live freely because of the price they paid. Paul makes a similar point about Jesus: through His sacrifice, He frees all who come to Him in faith. Yet the Galatians, who received the Spirit through faith, were being persuaded that keeping the law was necessary to complete their standing as God's people. Paul leaves them with a question: Do we really already belong to the family of God or not? We can't have both. If we are justified by works of the law, then Christ died in vain.

Key Line: Jesus didn't leave anything for you to pay.

scripture focus

Read Galatians 3:1–9 aloud.

Context: Paul has just declared that we are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law (Galatians 2:16–21). Now he turns to the Galatians with deep concern and a series of pointed questions. He reminds them of their own experience: they received the Spirit and saw God work miracles among them through faith, not the law. Then he points to Abraham, who was counted righteous by believing God (Genesis 15:6) long before the law or circumcision was given.

time to consider (30 min)

Reflect on what God has spoken through this week's sermon by discussing the key truths together. Take this moment seriously: slow down, listen, and respond to what the Spirit is saying.

1. Remember the Message I Preached to You (Galatians 3:1)

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" Paul's sharp words show his deep concern for them. They were living a contradiction, yielding to deceivers even after Jesus Christ had been publicly portrayed before them as crucified. The cross was the center of Paul's preaching: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). We can be tempted to boil Christianity down to good works, self-help, or inspirational talk, but Christ's cross is the message.

discussion questions

- What "bewitching" voices or messages pull believers away from the simplicity of the gospel today?
- In what ways do we reduce Christianity to good works, self-help, or inspiration? How do we keep the cross at the center?

Insight: Christ's cross isn't part of the message; it is the message.

2. Faith Is How the Work Begins, Continues, and Ends (Galatians 3:2–5)
Paul asks, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” The birth of these churches came through the power and simplicity of faith in the gospel, and it was experiential, like the house of Cornelius, and like us. Then he asks, “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” We cannot perfect God’s perfect work through human imperfection. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), and we continue and finish the same way. God is the One who supplies the Spirit and works miracles; Jesus still says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37–39).

discussion questions

- Where are you tempted to finish in the flesh what God began in the Spirit?
- What would it look like for you to be more dependent on Jesus now than when you first began?

Insight: Growing in Christ doesn’t mean needing Him less; it means depending on Him more.

3. How Abraham Is Our Prototype (Galatians 3:6–9)
Paul shows that Gentile believers are already children of Abraham by faith, with no circumcision needed. Abraham was counted righteous before the law or circumcision was given. In Genesis 15 he was waiting, struggling, and doubting in his tent when God said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars… So shall your offspring be.” And Abraham believed the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness. In the midst of his doubt, he made a choice. God chose Abraham as a living example for us to follow, so that in him all nations would be blessed.

discussion questions

- Where are you “in your tent” right now—waiting, struggling, or doubting? What might it mean to step outside and look at the stars?
- What do you most need to believe God for today: that He can save you, forgive you, change you, or give you a new beginning?

Insight: God said it. I believe it. That settles it.

renewal

Reflect: We haven’t become so sophisticated in our abilities and talents that we can add to Christ’s work; we have become more dependent on Him. Let the world call it foolishness. We began by trusting Him, we will continue to trust Him, and we will finish by trusting Him. Where is God inviting you to stop trying to pay and simply trust Him?

Key Line: What’s left for you to do is trust Him. Jesus hasn’t left anything on the table for you to pay.

missional living (30 min)

1. Write down how God met you in the first moments of your faith, and thank Him for it this week.
2. Each morning, ask the Spirit to fill you, and pray John 7:37–38: “Lord, I’m thirsty. I come to You to drink.”
3. Share with one person how Jesus paid for everything, and what it means that you no longer have to earn His love.

follow-up

Where did you catch yourself trying to “tip” Jesus’ work this week? How did trusting Him instead change your response?

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closing time of prayer (15 min)

Pray for gratitude for the price Jesus paid, a fresh filling of the Spirit, faith for those who are waiting or doubting, and grace to finish more dependent on Jesus than when we began.

final takeaways

- Freedom always costs, and Jesus paid it all; there is nothing left for us to pay.
- The cross of Christ is the center of the gospel message.
- We received the Spirit by faith, and we continue and finish by faith, not by the flesh.
- Abraham was counted righteous by believing God, before the law was ever given.
- All who believe are children of Abraham and share in his blessing.

Memory Verse: *Galatians 3:3 — "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"*