

# Galatians 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

## Analysis

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**For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.** Paul explains verse 2's shocking claim. "For I testify again" (martyromai de palin, μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν)—I solemnly witness, I testify as under oath. "To every man that is circumcised" (panti anthrōpō peritemnomenō)—to any person undergoing circumcision for righteousness. "That he is a debtor" (hoti opheiletēs estin, ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστίν)—he becomes obligated, indebted.

"To do the whole law" (holon ton nomon poiēsai, ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι)—to perform, accomplish the entire law. Circumcision was entry into Torah covenant obligation. Accept one command as necessary for righteousness, you're obligated to keep all 613 commands perfectly (James 2:10). The law is package deal, not buffet. You can't cherry-pick circumcision while ignoring the rest. And since perfect law-keeping is impossible (except Christ), choosing law means choosing condemnation. The Judaizers promised the Galatians maturity through circumcision; Paul shows they're promising slavery to impossible burden ending in curse (3:10).

## Historical Context

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The Mosaic law comprised 613 commands (rabbinically identified) covering all life areas. Circumcision was the covenant sign (Genesis 17), marking entry into Torah obligation. Proselytes to Judaism underwent circumcision committing to Torah observance. Paul's point: you can't accept circumcision for righteousness while

ignoring Sabbath, dietary laws, sacrifices, festivals, etc. The Judaizers apparently presented circumcision as the key requirement, downplaying the law's full scope. Paul exposes this inconsistency: it's all or nothing. And "all" is impossible, leaving only condemnation.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. Have you recognized that accepting any work as necessary for righteousness obligates you to perfect obedience in everything?
2. How do you respond to religious teaching that emphasizes certain commands while ignoring others as somehow less binding?
3. What does it mean practically that law is a package deal—either accept all its obligations or none as means of righteousness?

## Interlinear Text

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μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι  
I testify For again to every man that is circumcised that  
G3143 G1161 G3825 G3956 G444 G4059 G3754

όφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι  
a debtor he is the whole law to do  
G3781 G2076 G3650 G3588 G3551 G4160

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 3:10** (Word): For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

**Romans 2:25** (Word): For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

**Deuteronomy 27:26** (Word): Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

**Ephesians 4:17** (Witness): This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

**Deuteronomy 8:19** (Witness): And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

**Deuteronomy 31:21** (Witness): And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware.

**Matthew 23:18** (Parallel theme): And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.