

20200712 Galatians 3 Part 2 Who has bewitched you?

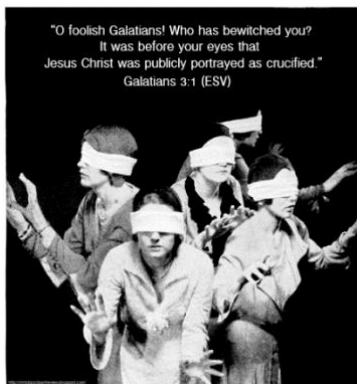


GALATIANS 3 Part 2

Who has bewitched you?

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? ⁴Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? ⁵So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? ⁶So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Galatians 3:1-6, NIV).

Paul starts this part of his letter with a list of questions. I want to start off today with a quick review of what Sandy and I discussed about the first six verses on the Wednesday podcast, and then we’re going to walk through the rest of this chapter to get a real understanding of what Paul is talking about. On Wednesday, Sandy and I brought out the idea that we, as modern evangelical Christians, aren’t prone to put our trust in Levitical works (the Jewish Mosaic Law) for our salvation. However, we *are* prone to maybe put our trust in our own resources. Paul begins the chapter with six questions, so let’s quickly look at those first.



1) Who has bewitched you? Paul starts the chapter off asking “who has cast a spell on you to get control of you?” This is a reference to pagan magic which was everywhere in Galatia. Remember, there were all kinds of magicians in the Bible. Many were *actually* doing supernatural things, but they were doing so with Satanic power. The Bible is full of references to these magicians and such, like Simon the Sorcerer (mentioned in Acts).

Interestingly, Paul uses the singular form in Greek of “who.” He’s saying there is “one” out there who is the source of pulling you off course. Who is it? He is referring to Satan. Paul reminds us that when things get weird and hostile, people are often just the “front,” so to speak, for spiritual warfare. Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Ephesus, *“¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12, KJV).*

I think it's easy for us to forget that we don't wrestle against "flesh and blood," but we wrestle against spiritual forces in high places. When we encounter hostility, it very well may be that we're in the midst of spiritual warfare and we don't recognize it. It is important for us to try to see the world through spiritual eyes. It is easy for example to get rattled during all of the current social unrest. Do not put too much hope in solutions that the world offers. Keep your spiritual eyes open and stay focused on the Word. It is so easy to get distracted from the things that really matter. I think that if Satan can't get you to do evil then he'll just distract you from doing good. Stay grounded. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

As believers, we can't have our souls stolen away, but we CAN have our hearts and minds stolen away. Young Christians are especially prone to being pulled away. I am observing that during this COVID crisis, many are getting more and more comfortable removing spiritual input from their lives. Staying at home becomes more and more attractive. When the influence of God's Word is removed from your heart and mind, other influences come in. People seem to fall under a spell. Don't let yourself be pulled under a spell.

2) Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law? Paul reminds the Galatians that they received the Holy Spirit by hearing the Gospel and responding to it. They did not receive the Spirit by working for it. We receive the Holy Spirit when we receive God's plan of salvation for our lives. It is a gift of grace.

3) Are you so foolish? Paul is basically saying, "really?" "Are you really this foolish?" You know, I think we too are foolish when we've been saved, and we've been given the Holy Spirit, but then we listen to influences that move in and corrupt the great work God is doing in our hearts. Don't be foolish in trying to feed your soul on Facebook and different news channels that are desperate for your attention. Don't neglect spending time in God's Word and in prayer. It will calm your soul much more than anything the world can throw at you. The world will stir your spirit up, but the Word of God will calm you down.

4) Are you now perfected by the flesh? With this question, Paul is reminding them of how they are becoming more holy. We have no power to do anything to accomplish our own salvation, and in the same way we have limited power to affect our future. It is through the daily submission to the Holy Spirit that we grow and become all that God would have us to be. Remember that right before this, in Galatians 2, Paul has declared that it is no longer he who lives but Christ lives in him.

5) Did you suffer things in vain? We as believers never suffer things in vain. Contrary to prosperity gospel teaching, we're pretty much guaranteed times of suffering. The Bible is clear that *"28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.)Romans 8:28, NKJV)*. Often, as we go through difficulty, none of it makes sense to us. This verse

encourages us, and reminds us that we don't suffer in vain. God can and does use the hardship we encounter in life for our good. James, the little brother of Jesus tells us to *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds."* (James 1:2, NIV). We don't need to go in search of things that make us suffer. Suffering just comes with the trials of life. Regardless of suffering, we can rest assured that "His grace is sufficient" no matter what we are going through (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

6) Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

Lastly, Paul reminds the Galatians that our own works of righteousness are not the source of the "miracles" that we see God perform in our lives. It is when we get to the end of ourselves, that we are able to see the hand of God at work in our lives.

For the rest of the chapter Paul goes into a detailed explanation of the purpose for the law and the gift of grace in our lives. He differentiates the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is all about faith being God's requirement for righteousness (justification before God by faith). The Mosaic covenant was about law-keeping. These were the laws (the Levitical laws) that made us conscious of our sin and our shortcomings. It was the Mosaic covenant with its requisite laws that were replaced by the "new covenant in His blood."

SONS OF ABRAHAM BY FAITH

⁷ *Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.* ⁸ *Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."* ⁹ *So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* (Galatians 3:7-9, NIV).

Paul argues that it is foolish take hold of the law or any other thing in being saved. Paul is saying that believers in Jesus are inheritors of God's covenant with Abraham. Remember that covenants are promises. They were promises made between two parties. They would make a deal with each other and then solemnize the deal with a strange, bloody ritual. They would cut animals in two and BOTH walk between them. The parties to the covenant were in effect saying "may the parties that break these promises be slaughtered like these animals."

When God made His promises to Abraham, something very different happened. God was the only participant. All that Abraham was required to do to benefit from that covenant was to believe. You can read it all in Genesis 15.

⁵ *He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."* ⁶ *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."* (Genesis 15:5-6, NIV).

Then we read the part about the covenant being made.

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. (At this point God made certain promises to Abram.)

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram..” (Genesis 15:10-12, 17-18, NIV).

Note: Abraham was asleep. My father, who was a doctor and a Hebrew scholar, used to say: “God put Abraham under anesthesia. And Abraham, while in his dream sleep, watched God making His promises.”

When God took Abraham out of the tent that night and showed him the sky, He made promises to Abraham. The text tells us that Abraham believed Him (God) and He (God) accounted it to him (Abraham) as righteousness. “Belief” has always been God’s standard to attain righteousness. Abraham attained right standing before God and we too can attain right standing before God in our belief.

Belief is way more than just mentally agreeing that God exists. To “believe in” means that you trust that God is Who He says that He is, and that He will do what He says He will do. It means that you choose to rely on Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, and to submit to Him.

When these Galatians came to know Jesus they knew it was done by belief, but now the Jews were telling the Gentiles that if they wanted to be saved from their sins, then they had to become Jews first and they had to obey all of the rules and regulations that the Mosaic covenant required.

The Mosaic covenant was conditional. The Abrahamic covenant was unconditional. It is the Mosaic covenant that was replaced by the New Covenant Jesus said was “in His blood.” That is what I often recite to you guys when we take the Lord’s Supper together.

We, as believers, are inheritors of that Abrahamic Covenant. It is ours as well. The Mosaic Covenant was replaced through Jesus. Paul then speaks again about the insufficiency of works.

¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” ¹¹ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” **[see Habakkuk 2:2-4]** ¹² The law (the Mosaic Law) is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole **[Jesus going to the cross].**” ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham **[belief being credited as righteousness]** might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (Galatians 3:10-14, NIV).

The law (Mosaic Law) and faith (the Abrahamic covenant) are incompatible. You can't mix the works of the law with the grace of Christ. Paul then gives another example.

*¹⁵ Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise **[the Mosaic Covenant doesn't set aside that covenant of faith]**. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Galatians 3:15-18, NIV).*

In the interest of time, I want to read through the rest of this chapter and make a couple of comments. You may be wondering, "How does this apply to me?" If you don't know Jesus, the way to Him is belief. If you do know Him, you can't trust fully in your own resources. Remember the first part of this sermon? The question Paul asks is, "Who has bewitched you?" Don't get side-tracked. These are times of great uncertainty and unrest. If the devil can't cause you to do evil, he will distract you so that you will not do good. Submit yourself again today to the Lord and choose to do good; not for your salvation but for your own peace and to extend God's grace to others.

Let us pray. "Lord, I confess that I've become distracted by the noise in society. You know there is unrest in our land. You know Lord, there are people trying to tear this country apart. Lord, help me to keep my eyes focused on you. Lord, let me love you more deeply and more fully than I ever have. Lord, I confess that I've hoped in my own resources, and Lord, who I am and what I have will never be enough to give me the safety and security that I can have in You. Lord, I trust again in You today to do a work in me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me."

In Jesus Name I pray, amen.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.