

Galatians

Chapter 3:1-9

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Galatians 3:1-9

After a lengthy defense of his Apostleship and an introduction to the works of the law, Paul then turns to rebuke the specific sin which clearly is the purpose for his letter. In the rebuke he appeals to their personal experiences (vss. 1-5), then to the example of Abraham (vss. 6-9)

- *1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*
- Paul reveals by his language how impassioned he is at the actions of the Galatians. Paul describes their actions as foolish. In the Bible a fool is referred to as one who lacks moral judgment not knowledge. Paul is not upset with them because they are infants in the Lord, but because they had Christ clearly portrayed and yet still fell into the trap of legalism coming from the Judaizers.
- The issue that prompted the dispute was not whether Christ was crucified, although he asks them rhetorically if Christ's crucifixion was not clearly portrayed. No, what Paul is driving at is that this doctrine of righteousness through obedience to the law was sufficient enough to invalidate or nullify the death of Christ. This doctrine emptied the cross of saving power and declares that Christ died in vain.
- *2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
- *3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*
- Paul reminds them of their conversion and how they were saved by grace through faith and how their faith came from hearing the gospel preached to them. The main argument is this; if it was necessary to have the grace of God to begin the race, why now do they think that they can finish the race without it? In essence, their believing the destructive heresy of the Judaizers led to the conclusion that says "God initiated me, but I stay in the club through my observance of the rules." Now, we may chime in with our own "Those silly Galatians" because we think that we would never commit such a grievous error. However, I believe that same error occurs in the "You can lose your salvation theology." Where God gives me salvation and then I fall into sin and thus out of salvation and then back in and back out again. This creates a man-centered gospel that is as worthy of damnation as any other.
- A major confusion arises around the doctrines of salvation and sanctification. Some think that God saves me and then I improve myself by obeying God's rules. This is emphatically false. Salvation is of the Lord and sanctification (the process whereby the elect are made Christ-like, *perfect*) is also the work of the Lord. 1 Thess 5:23-24 In short, our salvation and our righteousness comes from the Lord.
- *4 Have you suffered so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain?*
- Apparently, the Galatians had experienced some level of persecution for their faith. We don't know what it was but it was enough that Paul was aware of it. In essence he tells them that those sufferings were of no value now that they have left the true Gospel.
- *5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? --*
- Another rhetorical question reiterates that the seal of the Spirit is done by God. Notice that the Spirit is not supplied when someone speaks in tongues or when they are baptized but when they hear the gospel by faith.

- *6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. (NKJV)

- God gives a promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:1-7 that his offspring will be as numerous as the stars. In Genesis 17:1-10 God institutes circumcision as the sign of the covenant between God, Abraham and his offspring. Then after near sacrifice of Isaac, God gives a further promise to Abraham which Paul quotes in this verse. One of the greatest tragedies in the modern Christian church is that we don't believe this promise of God. Frankly, we think that there will probably be a large number of people in heaven, but we don't believe that the number will be too large to count. God's covenant with Abraham is continuing today. God's faithfulness to Abraham is manifest in His faithfulness to you. God is saving an imaginable multitude. The world will be covered with the Word of the Lord as the oceans cover the earth. This is a mighty and wonderful work that He is doing. But many Christians think that the whole plan is failing and will fail more and more until God will intervene and rescue His little project. We must drive this thinking far from us.
- Finally, Paul appeals to the example of Abraham whom God counted (reckoned) as righteous because Abraham believed God. It is important to understand why the example of Abraham is particularly applicable. Abraham believed God prior to receiving the covenant sign of circumcision and before the Mosaic law. He then goes on to say that all who are saved would be saved in a way patterned after Abraham. Romans 4:9-25.