

Bewitched, Billboarded, Baptized — Believe

Galatians 3:1–5

Righteousness is the exclusive domain of God. If we, who are inherently unrighteous, are to live and experience a life-giving relationship with God, we must be made righteous by him. The focus of the book of the letter to the Galatians is that righteousness from Christ comes to us through faith in God the Son. He accomplished the work. We are justified by faith in his atoning work on the cross.

The letter breaks down into 3 main sections: The Apostle’s authority to establish justification by faith as the doctrine of salvation, Chapters 1 & 2; The Theology of justification by faith, Chapters 3 & 4; and the Ethical and Practical implications of Justification by faith in Chapters 5 & 6. Today we launch into Chapter 3, which begins the 2nd section of the theology of Justification by faith alone. You will recall the many personal statements Paul makes about his authority in chapters 1 & 2, and you will notice, if you are listening carefully, a change in the argument from his personal authority, to appealing to central elements of the Gospel. Paul is still worked up about how they have departed from the Gospel of grace and have come under the legalistic influence of the Judaizers, you’ll hear that, too, in the opening salvo of Chapter 3. So now he shifts from his apostolic authority to the supernatural work of God in doing for us what we could not: produce righteousness on our own.

Let’s read today’s passage, and back up just a few verses into chapter 2. Our focus text is Galatians 3:1–5. We’ll begin reading in Galatians 2:20 and continue through chapter 3: 9.

[beginning in] **Galatians 2:20** and through **3:9**

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

^{3:1} O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

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⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

PRAY

I. Bewitched

v. 1a — O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?

Or to put it another in common vernacular, “Hey! Are you people brain dead?”

You are being drawn away by these Judaizers who are returning to the ceremonial law and circumcision to be justified. Have you even stopped once to think this through and see if it conforms to the finished work of Christ? Answer: “No, is that important?”

The word *foolish* speaks of ignorance — a lack of knowledge — but also has a moral component to it. They are not thinking rightly according to truth. Indeed, they are not thinking at all, but acting out of a lazy ignorance. In other words, they haven’t stirred themselves to think about the finished work of Christ, what it means, or the implications. They simply are in the sway of their feelings, or their emotions. You might imagine one of them would respond to Paul chastising them by saying, “Oh, well, we believed Christ, sure enough, but these guys showed up and told us they knew something and we should add some of the law stuff, and... what were we supposed to do? They were here, and they said it, so we did it.”

Parents, have you ever had a situation with your child when they did something that they should have known better than to do, but they fell under the influence of someone else and did something dumb? When you get to them to find out what happen you say, “What were you thinking?” And they tell you, *Well, Erika was doing it, so I kinda felt like it was OK.* And your next question: If Erika jumped off a building, would you do it? *Well, would that be wrong? I mean, it is Erika...*

Their ignorance was rooted in laziness, and that’s the moral problem. They *should* have known better, but they were not putting forth any effort to think about what they were doing. Our faith is more than that just knowing facts, but it shouldn’t be less than that, else we end up as they were. Let’s remind ourselves of the great commandment, You shall love the Lord your God with all your, all your

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soul, *all your mind*, and all your strength. We are to give ourselves to know this God — to learn of him, and discipline ourselves to study him and know his ways in increasing measure. This is part of loving God, just as getting to know your spouse is part of loving them. How much credibility would you have if you tell someone how much you love your spouse, but you never bother to find out what color their eyes are.

Their lazy ignorance set them up for a Judaizer Jedi Mind trick. That's what is meant by the term *bewitched*. Because they were discipling themselves to grow in knowledge of God, they were susceptible to the Judaizers who showed up and said, "This is not the finished work of salvation you are looking for." [repeat] "You need to beef up your righteousness by circumcision." [We need to beef up our own righteousness.]

If the Jedi mind trick can influence the weak-minded, then legalism and pride can have a strong influence on the those driven by feelings and too lazy to learn of Christ. Because they had not established a foundation of truth in their thinking, Paul says, "Hey, are you hypnotized or something? Did someone put you under an evil-eye spell?"

Let's take heed that we are to be growing in knowledge of the Lord.

2 Peter 1:3 — His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the *knowledge* of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

Romans 6:6 — We *know* that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Romans 12:2 — Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of *your mind*, that by testing you may *discern* what is the will of God...

Study God's word. Know God's word. Grow in knowledge of his word. Do it as an act of love. Do it as safety for your soul, lest you be Jedi Mind-Tricked by some false teacher like the Galatians were.

Teachers, take heart and be encouraged in your work. The Christian faith is a thinking faith, and a knowing faith, not a sensate, blundering, wishy washy whatever I feel like today, faith. And whether or not you are a teacher, or whether or not you even have a good teacher to sit under, you have the complete revelation of God in his Word. Give yourself to it and grow in knowledge so that you do not fall under the spell of those who lead away from fullness in Christ.

And what is to be the central core of Christian teaching? The finished work of Christ on the Cross.
v. 1b — It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Jesus Christ crucified.

II. Billboarded

Billboarded. That's the strength of the word that is translated by the phrase *publicly portrayed*. It means to write something publicly, as though a billboard that cannot be missed or misunderstood. Jesus Christ was publicly crucified, and it has been publicly proclaimed, and you publicly heard it, Galatians, and you publicly responded in faith. Let us say with Paul, in **1 Corinthians 2:2**, I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

We are to billboard this, to write it down publicly, to proclaim the truth of that Jesus Christ was crucified bearing the sin of those who come to him by faith. He died, according to the Scripture, he was buried, and he rose on the third day, according to the Scripture. The cross of Christ, his crucifixion, is the center not only of redemptive history, but all history.

There has been a fad in American evangelicalism to strive to preach sermons that are "relevant." ***New and relevant*** sermons replace the old and irrelevant. Often what is served is some proof-texting from different places in the Bible to fit a popular topic, like how to manage your finances, or how to have a better sex life. Now that's relevant. Enough of the irrelevancies of the doctrine of atonement and justification by faith. Give us something we can take home put to good use tonight.

But the most relevant thing that would have kept the Galatians from going in the ditch of a false Gospel was the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. That would have tethered them to truth, and when the Judaizers showed up with Jedi Mind Tricks they could have sung:

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When he shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in him be found;

Dressed in his righteousness, alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand,

All other ground is sinking sand.

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Christ's crucifixion was billboarded in the early church. The Galatians mindlessly wandered away from it. In a day of increasing universalism and truth is determined by how I feel at any given moment, we are to billboard Christ's substitutionary death, and remind ourselves of this good news: We were reconciled to God through Jesus Christ when he made peace by the blood of his cross. Put your faith in him. Believe in him and live.

Now the Apostle asks a series of four rhetorical questions that is intended to shake them out of their intellectual dullness and lethargy.

v. 2 — Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

v. 3 — Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

v. 4 — Did you suffer so many things in vain

v. 5 — Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

You noticed, perhaps, that 3 out of the 4 questions deal with the work and empowering of the Holy Spirit. This is major emphasis begins the theology section of justification by faith, and will take on great importance when we get to the fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5. Let's take a few minutes now and see that Paul points to indwelling Spirit as evidence of being justified by faith. We will come back and spend more time when we get to chapter 5. For now, consider: **Bewitched, Billboarded, Baptized**.

Baptized

The word baptized does not show up in these verses, but the verses describe the what it looks like when one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The term is used in **1 Corinthians 12:13** — For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. We don't have time to take that apart in any comprehensive way, but broadly, when we are born again, as John 3 describes, and come to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit places us in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is placed in believers, to live in them, to empower them. We become the temple of the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin; he brings about repentance; He comforts, he teaches. These are supernatural acts accomplished by God alone.

We read **Romans 8** as the Call to Worship. Let's redirect our thoughts there and see that salvation in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer are inextricably linked. You cannot have one without the other. It will be a bit frustrating not to take time and explain and bask in this

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passage, but notice the role and work of the Holy Spirit when one is in Christ. And in v. 9, very clearly we see that we are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us.

Romans 8:1–11 — There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

I began the sermon by saying righteousness is the exclusive domain of God. Sin separates from God because sin is the essence of unrighteousness. The man and woman are driven away from the presence of God in garden because of sin. They no longer enjoy closeness and communion. Sin has created separation from God and death in the lives of unrighteous sinners ever since.

The focus of the letter of Galatians is that we are justified, declared righteous by God through faith in Christ Jesus. If separation from God is evidence of unrighteousness, Paul is making the argument in 3 of these rhetorical questions that the Holy Spirit in you is evidence that you are righteous in Christ and the separation has been overcome through Christ's finished work. This is powerful good news.

The Judaizers are loading them up with law-keeping in order to achieve acquire greater righteousness. Paul says the work of Christ gained justified us before God, supplying all the righteousness we need to be in right relationship with him, and the proof is seen in the fact that God himself takes up residence in the very life of the one who places their faith in Christ. Stunning! What

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closer communion can there be? What could circumcision possibly do that is produce any greater communion with God than the Spirit living inside me?

Let's quickly look at the work of the Spirit Paul points to as evidence of regeneration, being in Christ: **v. 2** — The Spirit was received, not earned through works of the Law. That is, God gave his Spirit to believers — to believers... those exercised faith as they heard the Gospel. **Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?** We heard the Gospel. God opened our ears by the Spirit to hear and respond to the Gospel, and so we **believed** the Gospel. We did not earn the Spirit through some meritorious act. God graciously gave the Spirit when we believed.

v. 3 — We began our journey of faith by the Spirit, the beginning of our conformity to the image of Christ, and this ongoing work of sanctification, being made like Christ, is completed by the Spirit. We don't just need a good push off of the starting line by the Spirit and then we're left to run on our own. We are led by the Spirit, and that leading is evidence that we are sons of God, as Romans 8:14 says. The Spirit continues to give resurrection power and conform us to the image of the Son until we are completed at the Day of Jesus Christ.

v. 5 — The Holy Spirit working in us supplies supernatural power — and in their case physical miracles. They had almost certainly seen first-hand miracles following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The apostles were given miraculous power to heal, to speak in tongues, to validate their apostolic ministry. At Pentecost people were speaking in languages they had not studied to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to all nations. **v. 5** — **Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?**

The evidence that they did not need to add the Law to faith was that the Holy Spirit was miraculously at work in them from the moment of salvation, not sometime afterward when they earned enough points under the law to purchase a measure of the Spirit.

The question we skipped in **v. 4** pointed them to persecution they suffered for believing in Christ alone, forsaking all other worthlessness. He points them back to white hot passion of their faith before they got off track, reminding them of the certainty of salvation they experienced to the point that they would not trade it even in the face of persecution. Even in that the Holy Spirit was at work.

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Our time is up for this morning. But let's take just a minute and reflect on the beauty and goodness of these verses.

First, are you thinking rightly about the finished work of Christ? Has unbelief or pride gripped your heart in some way that you think you can, or need to add something to the cross to be made right with God? I assure on the authority of the Scripture that if Christ's atoning work did not complete the work of salvation, you are lost, because you'll never be able to do any better. But Christ did finish the work! Look away from yourself and behold him there, the risen Lamb, my perfect spotless righteousness. Look to him in faith and receive eternal life from him.

You can err as easily on the other side. It is true that Christ has finished the work. There is no other sacrifice needed or available. But all that Christ has done in dying for the forgiveness of sin, in making with God, in reconciling us to God — all that Christ has done remains of no value to me as long as I remain outside of Christ. Today is the day of salvation. He has finished the work, and he offers the gifts of faith and repentance. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart. Christ calls you to come to him in faith. Turn from sin and self and spiritual darkness and come to Christ. In him, alone, are righteousness and peace.

PRAY — Lord, illumine our minds that we may think rightly and understand what you have done for at the cross. Give faith and repentance that we may turn from sin and death to you. Let the sweet conviction of the Holy Spirit be heavy in our hearts that we may love you more than sin. Make dead hearts live, to eternal glory, and give the Spirit that all who hear your call may live in resurrection power.