

Galatians 3:1-9

The Faith of Fools

I. CONTEXT REVIEW/ICE-BREAKER TABLE DISCUSSION – GALATIANS 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ.” – how? In what way was Paul crucified?

What died was not Paul’s physical body, nor his personality, nor his Soul/Spirit. What died was His old covenant identity rooted in law, performance, and self justification. The sinful self (one that sought righteousness through works) was executed at the cross in union with Christ.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” – how does this impact a daily walk?

Union with Christ means a new governing principle directs life. Identity is received, not achieved. Obedience flows from security, not fear. Decisions are filtered through trust in Christ rather than self preservation.

II. PAUL’S REBUKE – GALATIANS 3:1

“O foolish Galatians!”

- Greek word: *anoētos* (*UH-NYE-UH-TOSS*)
- Meaning: not intellectually stupid, but spiritually dull, morally careless
- Paul is not insulting intelligence; he is confronting failure to reason theologically

Teaching emphasis:

Paul assumes the Galatians *know better*. Their error is not ignorance, it is abandoning what they already understood.

“Who has bewitched you?”

- Greek word: *baskainō* (*BASK-AYE-NO*)
- Used of casting an evil eye, deception, spiritual manipulation
- Implies outside influence stealing focus, not innocent drift.
- They were effectively taking their eyes off Christ!

Clarified meaning:

Paul treats false teaching as spiritually dangerous, not merely doctrinally inconvenient.

“Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified”

- Greek word: *prographō* (“placarded,” “posted publicly”)
- Used of official public notices or billboards

Teaching point:

They didn’t miss the gospel, it was vividly, unmistakably proclaimed.

The issue is not clarity on what they were given; it is the potential error of replacement.

III. THE CENTRAL QUESTION – GALATIANS 3:2

“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”

- Greek structure: sharply contrasted alternatives
- “Hearing with faith” (*akoēs pisteōs*) = hearing that results in faith, not mere listening

Clarified meaning:

Paul anchors theology in experience, but *not* emotion.

Their own conversion testifies that faith (*not* law-keeping) brings life.

Why this matters:

The Spirit was received through hearing with faith. Conversion itself proves that righteousness is grounded in belief, not law keeping.

Theological Principle: What begins by faith continues by faith.

IV. THE ABSURDITY OF REVERSING THE GOSPEL – GALATIANS 3:3

“Having begun by the Spirit...”

- Greek: *enarchomai* (to begin, initiate)
- Indicates God’s decisive action, not human effort

“...are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

- Greek: *epiteleō* (to bring to completion)
- Passive voice: “are you being completed” ... by what power?

Key contrast:

- Spirit = God’s work

- Flesh = human ability, religious effort, law-performance
- Diagnostic Question: Where am I tempted to measure spiritual maturity by performance rather than dependence?

Paul's Logic: "If God started the work, why do you think *you* finish it?"

V. EXPERIENCE AND ONGOING POWER – GALATIANS 3:4-5

"Did you suffer so many things in vain?"

- Greek: *paschō* (to experience, endure)
- Likely includes persecution tied to early faith

Clarified meaning:

If law-keeping is now required, then their previous suffering for faith alone becomes meaningless.

God's continuing work (v.5)

- "Supplies the Spirit" (*epichorēgō*) — richly, generously
- "Works miracles" (*energeō*) — active, ongoing power

Teaching emphasis:

God's present activity still operates on the same principle as conversion: faith, not law.

VI. ABRAHAM AS THE PATTERN AND EXAMPLE – GALATIANS 3:6-9

"Abraham believed God" (v.6)

- Greek: *episteusen* — decisive trust
- Faith is not vague belief; it is reliant confidence in God's promise

"It was counted to him as righteousness"

- Greek: *logizomai* — credited, accounted, reckoned
- Accounting language, not moral transformation language

Clarified meaning:

Righteousness is credited, not achieved.

True sons of Abraham (v.7)

- "Those who are of faith" is identity defined by means, not ethnicity
- Faith is now the family marker.

The gospel preached beforehand (v.8)

- God's promise to Abraham already contained the gospel trajectory

Teaching emphasis:

Paul insists justification by faith is not a New Testament innovation — it is the original plan.

Core Truth: The gospel of justification by faith was always God's redemptive plan.

Final Reflection: How does this passage reshape the way I think about growth, obedience, and assurance?

Summary thus far:

1. The Galatian error

- *They did not reject Christ outright...*
- *They attempted to supplement Christ*

2. Paul's theological logic

- *Conversion by faith*
- *Growth by faith*
- *Identity by faith*

3. The danger today

- *Law-thinking can look spiritual...(especially if our understanding of the Spirit is weak)*
- *But it subtly shifts trust from Christ's work to our performance*
- *This manifests itself in legalism AND nomism.... What? (SCAN BELOW)*



Paul explained the meaning of justification and sanctification by faith alone. He argued their validity from experience (3:1-5), from Scripture (3:6-14), and from logic (3:15-29) in order to dissuade his readers from returning to reliance on the Mosaic Law. In 3:1-18 Paul argued against legalism, the belief that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by keeping rules.² In 3:19—4:7 he argued against nomism, the belief that we need to make law the ruling governor of our lives.³ "Paul's Galatian letter, it must always be remembered, is not concerned just with 'legalism,' even though sadly it is often understood only in those terms. Rather, Galatians is principally concerned with 'nomism' or whether Gentiles who believe in Christ must also be subject to the directives of the Mosaic law."

Conversion by faith.

Growth by faith.

Identity by faith.

Blessing by faith.

The Christian life does not move beyond the gospel. It deepens into it.

1. Why does Paul treat theological error as spiritual danger rather than academic disagreement?
2. Where do modern Christians tend to “begin by the Spirit” but try to “finish by the flesh”?
3. Why is Abraham such a devastating counter-example to legalism?