

## THE CRESCENDO OF GOD'S CHARACTER

***“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.***

***2 I 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?***

***3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?***

***4 Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?***

***5 So 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?” (Galatians 3:1-5)***

### **The Spirit of God is what our world needs.**

(Let me share five things the Spirit does, not an exhaustive list of course.)

- **1. Spirit pours love** (he is likened to water). The Spirit makes God's love real and cleanses/heals the heart.
- **2. Spirit imparts joy and peace.** He is likened wine. Who isn't looking for peace and joy?
- **3. Spirit energizes.** The Spirit causes us to have this positive energy that the world finds attractive. (When I see people get filled with the Spirit, their whole complexion changes.)

- **4. Spirit enlightens.** (he is the teacher who knows all things). The Spirit causes us have more exciting epiphanies.
- **5. Spirit works miracles.** (Meg's feet)

Although the Galatians began as a group of people who were *experiencing* the Spirit of God working in their hearts, lives, and communities, now they were *bewitched*.

Some people came and cast a spell on them.  
The Galatians were under a hex.

It's easy to start off on the right track- with the right heart and focus, but it's very possible to veer off into deception.

Bewitchment can happen to the best of us.

To be bewitched is to be spellbound- where you can't think or see straight.

Even after experiencing God's Spirit in a special and tangible way, we can all make some foolish decisions. We too can lose our way.

- How do we lose our way as Christians?
- How do we become vulnerable to getting hexed?
- How do we go from spiritual revival-mode to spiritual survival-mode?

***“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.” (Galatians 3:1)***

***How do we lose our way as Christians?***

**If we don't focus on Jesus and what He did on the cross, we can end up foolish and bewitched.**

The cross clearly portray God's love and goodness.

- When we believe in the love and goodness of God, the Spirit continues to work in and through our lives.

The Galatians initially heard the good news of God's love and goodness demonstrated on the cross, and believe in His grace.

But then they replaced the SUPERIOR message with an INFERIOR one. So, evidently, they began getting inferior results.

They downgraded their message and it led to a downgraded experience.

- They went from God's Spirit working in and through them, to just human effort.
- They went from soaring on the winds of the Spirit like an eagle, to flapping hysterically like a hummingbird.
- They went from riding the waves of the Spirit, to swimming upstream.

**The message of the cross connects us to God's Spirit.**

Not everything is a conduit or conductor of electricity.

Medal is. It's a CONDUCTOR.

Wood isn't. It's an INSULATOR.

Medal can carry electricity and can impart electricity.

Wood can not carry electricity and cannot impart electricity.

The message of the cross connects us to God's Spirit and power. It's a conductor.

But the message of circumcision is like wood, it insulates us from the currents of God's Spirit. We will explain about the message of circumcision in just a little bit.

SO the Galatians exchanged METAL for WOOD, a conductor of the Spirit to an insulator of the Spirit.

Why would someone in their right mind do that?

Exactly. They weren't in their right mind.

They were bewitched.

### ***Where do we get our beliefs about God?***

(3 possibilities- not exhaustive)

- **1. Parents.** Perhaps we project upon God the way our parents were with us:

- *Stern. Scary. Distant. Selfish. Impossible to please.*
- *Kind. Gracious. Forgiving. Selfless.*
- *And we made God into the image of our parents.*

- **2. Experiences.**

- Perhaps you had a powerful experience with the love of God.
- Did you know over 50 percent of Americans now claim to have had a supernatural experience with the divine? That's a big jump from about 21% fifty years ago.
  - Perhaps you witnessed a miracle.
  - Maybe your experience was that you met some Christians and they exuded love and life- and you thought to yourself, *"I want what they have! I want to know who they know!"*
  - Or maybe your experience was that you met some Christians who were vicious and judgmental and you thought to yourself, *"I'm not very interested in their God."*
  - *Or, maybe you went through years without getting your prayers answered, making you feel ignored and invisible.*

- **3. Religious + Scared Texts.**

- Maybe you have studied in the category of religious fundamentalism: the Koran, the Torah, the Bible.

- Or maybe you have studied in the category of mysticism: Occult books or New Age philosophies.

HOWEVER.

As Christians, we are to get our beliefs about God from the Jesus and Him crucified.

**“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2)**

Chances are, we have filters keeping us from seeing God for who He really is:

- The filters being our parents.
- The filters of our experiences.
- The filters of our religious training/exposure.

Our parents, experiences, and sacred texts can present some truths about God and yet also impart a lot of misconceptions about God- but the cross reveals to us the heart of God, unfiltered.

On the cross, God exposed Himself.

- Jesus literally hung naked on the cross. There was no towel.
  - There are some outfits that can make your body look like something it's not. In High School, I knew a girl who was pregnant but nobody knew she was pregnant, because it was hidden under her baggy clothes. God was saying, *“I'm not hiding anything...this is ME.”*
  - A spear pierced through His heart from the outside, that's why blood and water flowed out. There was a hole that let you see into or feel into His heart. The cross is an open entry into God's heart for you.
  - There was a veil in the Temple that separated humanity from God's glory and as Jesus is hanging on the cross, the veil tears apart. No human was strong enough to tear that veil. It tore from top to bottom, for

God was saying, *“I’m revealing myself to you...This is me...This is my heart...This is my character...Look at my son dying for you.* I’m unraveling before you the mystery of Me, I’m unveiling ME. Before you took guesses on what I was like and how I felt about you, but now... guess no more.”

I am love that is as strong as death.

I am love that pursues.

I am love that pours out.

I am love that dies for my enemies.

I am love that will do whatever it takes to be in relationship with you.

And I am love that destroys all of your excuses so you can finally get to know me.

SO the cross was the crescendo.

We believe in progressive revelation- leading up to the cross.

(SHOW GRAPHS, Progressive revelation first.)

**Not all revelation of God is on an equal playing field.**

- God revealed Himself through Moses, yet revealed Himself much more fully in Jesus and His crucifixion. That’s why Jesus would say, “Moses said...but I say onto you...” Jesus wasn’t SUBSEQUENT to Moses but to SUPERSEDE Moses.

- Remember when Jesus was in the wilderness, Satan tried to misuse Scripture to keep Jesus from God’s will. Satan can also take some Scriptures today, and misconstrue them to keep us from God’s best for our lives.

Those who were bewitching the Galatians subscribed to GRAPH B rather than GRAPH A.

**They were using Scriptures to paint portraits of God.**

**Yet, their paintings were inferior, outdated, inaccurate, and enslaving.**

- When you hold to the inferior, you can't grab the superior.
- When you are stuck on what's out of date, you can't tap into what's available now.
- When you have the inaccurate, you don't have the more accurate.
- When you are enslaved, you can't live free.

Paul was reminding them that they started their spiritual journeys, hearing and believing Jesus and the cross - The gospel of God's grace, **THEY STARTED AT THE TOP OF THE HILL, NOW THEY WERE SLIDING DOWN**, literally backsliding.

Downgrading!

When they were on top of the hill, and heard about the cross of Jesus, the how's and why's of his mutilation, their lives were changed.

But now they are hearing a different message, that they need to mutilate their own flesh (circumcision)- in order to be spiritually safe and in efforts to grow spiritually.

***Do we feed on the Circumcision or the Cross?***

- **Circumcision is what they needed to do. The cross is what God already did.**
  - **Circumcision was a picture of their devotion to God. The cross was a picture of God's devotion to us.**
  - **Circumcision was the law. The cross was the life.**
  - **Circumcision changed you on the outside. The cross changes you on the inside.**
  - **Circumcision was something only men could apply. The cross is for everyone.**

- Some people have that organ, others don't.
- Whatever you are, whoever you are- the cross speaks to you, *“God loves you to death and there is no reason not to begin a relationship with Him. He will love you where you are at, and love you into who you are supposed to be.”*
- Hearing that you need to be circumcised did not connect them to the God's Spirit.
- But what Jesus did on the cross and why He did is, is the conduit to the Spirit!

### **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil vs. Tree of Life**

The early church fathers taught that the cross was the tree of life.

In the Garden of Eden, there were two trees, one of the knowledge of life and then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life was a picture of the grace that flows from the cross.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a picture of trying to get justified by the works of the law - to which circumcision was the entrance fee.

The consequence of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that they felt shame and self-inflicted separation from God. And they desperately looked for whatever they could to alleviate their self-rejection, in Adam and Eve's case they turned to blaming each others and fig leaves.

The Galatians were introduced to the tree of life, the cross. When they ate of the tree of life, they experienced miracles, the Spirit, and deep transformation.



Yet, just like Adam and Eve were lured away from the tree of life towards the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so were the Galatians. History repeats, Adam and Eve were bewitched and so were the Galatians.

Paul knew that if they move away from depending on the cross for their justification and their spiritual growth, and they start focusing on their own works, they would end up in the same pit that Adam and Eve fell into- coming under the same “curse” of:

***shame, self-inflicted separation from God, fearful, and self-rejection.***

It would leave them condemned and condemning (Adam and Eve became very judgmental and accusatory).

If you seek to be justified by our works and God’s law, it’s just a matter of time, until we break the law and lose confidence and self-worth and become ver fearful.

That’s why God wants us to feast on the tree- the cross- His grace.  
On that tree you will find the fruit of the Spirit.

***“The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” - (2 Corinthians 3:6)***

***“The Spirit works as Christians don’t rely on their own works, but rather consciously and continuously rest in Christ alone for their acceptability and completeness.”***

***- Timothy Keller***

The bewitchers were not telling these Christians to forsake Christ. They were just explaining how Christ was not enough.

They weren’t saying, forget the cross, they were saying, “It’s not enough that He was pieced for you, you must be also be trimmed for Him....”

They were saying that Christ and the cross must be coupled with your conversion and devotion Judaism.

That you needed to embrace the teachings of Jesus and Moses- because they put Jesus and Moses on equal playing field, so Jesus was SUBSEQUENT to Moses, but really, Jesus came to SUPERSEDE Moses.

Jesus is not another window into God, He is God!  
The cross is the supreme revelation of God.

The bewitchers put cross and circumcision on the same level.  
The cross was not subsequent, but supreme.  
IT'S NOT GRAPH B, It's GRAPH A.

Let's remember that Jesus saves us, it's not Jesus plus your works.  
It's not that He's Batman and you are Robin.  
He's Batman and your Gotham city (the city he continually saves).

You aren't his medical assistant, you are His patient.

The bewitcher were saying you are ROBIN you are the MEDICAL ASSISTANT and He can't get it done without you.

That message was trying to make them eat from two trees at the same time...but these were spaced out far enough where that was not possible. Even now, it's not possible to mix GRACE with LEGALISM.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE BEEN DRIFTING FROM THE TREE OF LIFE, would you come back.

PERHAPS YOU HAVEN'T BEEN SEEING GOD CLEARLY, WOULD YOU SEE HIM THROUGH THE LENS OF THE CROSS.

PERHAPS YOU WENT FROM SPIRITUAL REVIVAL-MODE TO SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL MODE. COME BACK TO THE CROSS.

PERHAPS YOU REPLACED THE HOLY SPIRIT CONDUCTORS WITH HOLY SPIRIT INSULATORS.

COME BACK TO THE TREE OF LIFE- YOU WILL FIND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT THERE- YOU WILL FIND THE MOST ACCURATE PICTURE OF GOD- YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE AND FEEL INTO HIS HEART.