

WEEK 5 — GALATIANS 3:1-14

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”? 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. ¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall 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 hanged on a tree”—¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

QUESTIONS

The opening phrase of chapter 3 can be startling to our sense of politeness, but what is at stake that justifies such strong language toward these people? Hint: chapter 1:6-9

Paul asks, “Who has *bewitched* you?” The Greek word for “bewitched” is *ebaskainō* meaning to spellbind or seduce by false representation. According to the context, what are the Galatians being seduced by in regard to justification?

What do you think is so “bewitching” or “seducing” about being made right with God (“justified”) by “works of the law”?

Paul says in v. 1, “It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.” These people did not actually see the crucifixion of Christ, but the gospel was presented in such vivid and powerful imagery through Paul’s preaching that it was *as if* Christ was crucified before them. How is this relevant to what Paul says just before this? (“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?”) How do you think this applies to you today?



What contrast is Paul making again in verses 2-5? What new element does he include in the contrast that he has not introduced yet in Galatians?

According to v. 3-4, what two consequences come from seeking to be justified and receive the Spirit through “works of the law”? How does this reiterate the gravity of what is at stake in holding to the true gospel?

Notice, Paul is not rebuking the Galatians for living by the flesh through rampant immorality, but through their morality (“works of the law”). What do you think it looks like then for a Christian to “begin by the Spirit,” but later drift into being “perfected by the flesh”?

Paul then introduces the character of Abraham (v. 6-9) to further prove his point that justification is by faith and not by works of the law. How does this example further prove Paul’s argument that justification is by faith and not works?

How else does Paul make this point in Romans 4:8-12?

After proving his point with Abraham that the blessing of salvation has *always been* by faith, Paul then addresses the other side of the issue: *the curse* (v. 10-14). Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 as an argument for why you will be cursed if you rely on works of the law. What is the most essential point in Deut. 27:26 for Paul’s argument to make sense? Hint: what if someone objected to Paul by saying, “All I have to do to get God’s blessing is do everything he says!”

How do verses 11-12 further exclude the possibility of justification by works of the law?

According to verses 13-14, what work was done in order to free us from the curse and give us the blessing?

How do verses 13-14 and 2 Cor. 5:21 illustrate the *essence* of the gospel known by Martin Luther as “The Great Exchange.”

