

Foolish And Bewitched

Galatians 3:1-9

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I'm going to be reminding you, as we go through the whole study in Galatians, that the first two chapters are autobiographical. Paul was defending his apostleship. The reason he was doing that is because false teachers, known as Judaizers (Jewish believers that perhaps were just professing to believe, weren't really saved), came from Jerusalem into the churches of Galatia intentionally talking to the Gentile believers telling them, "You cannot be saved unless you become Jews." They were Judaizing Gentiles telling them, "You can't become Christians unless you believe in Jesus, yes, but that's just the beginning. You must also be circumcised, keep the law of Moses, worship on certain days, moons, and sabbath days, follow dietary laws, and keep all the commandments of Moses." Paul the Apostle was standing up to these false teachers who were preaching, not the gospel of God's grace but a gospel of works, that we're saved not by the grace of God through faith in Christ but by good works or good deeds.

You can actually carry this over today. You say, "Well, I'm not encountering any Judaizers in my neighborhood," but there are a lot of people today who profess to be believers but say, "You must be baptized in order to be saved." I believe that baptism is something we should do as an act of obedience, and we should do it because we're commanded in the Scriptures, but baptism does not save you. You can repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ and you're born again, and you're no more saved if you're dunked than if you're not dunked in the water. Sometimes I've gone to baptize somebody, and they say, "Hold me down a long time. I've got a lot to bury." Baptism is just a symbolic act—an outward showing of an inward work, an inward reality. Any rite, ritual, or requirements other than faith in Jesus Christ is not the gospel. It's not the good news that Paul preached. We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; and that's what the book of Galatians is all about. We're going to see some marvelous truths about that very subject tonight.

Paul was saying about his apostleship, which was under attack because they not only attacked the message but the messenger, "Look, I'm an apostle by direct commission from God Himself. I saw the risen Christ. He commissioned me. He sent me, and my message is independent of the other apostles. I didn't derive my message from them, I got it directly from the Lord," and so he was concluding that at the end of Galatians 2.

Beginning in Galatians 3, Paul is going to defend his teaching and doctrines of the gospel of God's grace. First of all he states the problem with the Galatians in verse 1. Then, he gives an argument in verses 2-5 from their own experience about the doctrine of grace through faith. In verses 6-9, he'll give the argument from Scripture. Now, what Paul is doing, if you want to outline this section, from verses 1-9, is basically arguing with the believers there in Galatia personally about their own relationship to God, that it was started and established by faith not by works, the blessings they received of salvation of the Spirit were through faith in Christ not by their good deeds or works. Then, he goes to Scripture from verses 6-9, and it's marvelous,

and argues that even Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was actually justified not by his works, nor by his Jewish rites of circumcision, but by faith in God's promises.

Beginning in verse 1, we have the problem that was going on in Galatia. Paul speaks directly to them in the churches of Galatia, which is the district today of modern Turkey. It was an area in which Paul established churches on his first and second missionary journeys. He starts in verse 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been," my King James Bible has, "evidently set forth, crucified among you?" You might reduce the problem to two things as seen there in verse 1. First, they were foolish; and secondly, they were bewitched. It sounds kind of harsh. It sounds kind of radical, but here Paul the Apostle, who loved these believers, he was their pastor and shepherd, actually says, "O foolish Galatians," and then again in verse 3 of the same chapter he refers to them as being foolish.

The word "foolish" literally means without understanding. Paul was saying, "Look, you're not thinking. You're not really using your brains." Do you know that it's okay for a Christian to use his mind? The Bible says we love God with all of our heart, our soul, our strength, and our mind. I'm sorry. I'm a pastor. I love the church. I love believers, but a lot of them are just very, very, very stupid. That's what Paul is saying. The J.B. Phillips paraphrase of this verse says, "O you idiot Galatians." Now, that's pretty radical. It's interesting though that Jesus used the same word. It's in Luke 24, when Jesus was on the road to Emmaus walking along with the two disheartened disciples. They were all sad and discouraged. He said, "What are you discouraged about?" They answered, "Well, about Jesus who we thought was the Messiah. He'd been crucified. We thought He'd risen from the dead," and Jesus said, "O ye foolish ones." It's the very same Greek word, "O ye foolish ones," or "O you simple ones." They weren't really thinking.

This really strikes me as interesting because for too long in the church we have been all about feelings, emotion, experience, and all that kind of stuff, which is all fine and dandy. God has created us as emotional beings, but we need to love God with all of our minds as well as our heart, soul, and strength. One of the best ways to avoid foolishness as a believer is a knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, the Bible. It's appalling in the church today how many people do not study or know the Bible. They don't understand Bible doctrine. They don't understand Scripture. They are foolish.

When Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, he also said the same thing. He said, "I don't want you to be ignorant. I don't want you to be foolish. I don't want you to be without understanding concerning those that have died." He used the metaphor, "falling asleep," "...that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." He was saying, "Listen, you guys need to know what the Scriptures teach. You need to understand God's Word." It's so common today that people are led astray and influenced by false teachers simply because they do not know the Bible. They need to know the Word of God. The way to recognize a counterfeit is to know the original, right? If you're going to detect a counterfeit bill, you need to study the real thing so that you know when a false doctrine has come along.

These, "...foolish Galatians," in verse 1 were also bewitched. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you." The word "who" there in the Greek is singular, so it's one of two things or both. First, it may be the leader of the Judaizers that he's singling out, the one actually leading the false teaching, saying that this individual has deceived or bewitched you; or it's the idea that Satan, who is the father of lies, was behind the false teacher leading them astray. Let me say this: You not only need to know your Bible, that you be not without understanding, but you need to be careful that you don't follow individuals simply because they're charismatic, dynamic, wonderful, you like their personalities, they make you feel good, they're popular, they've written a lot of books, they're on tv, or they have a big church. You need to be careful. Follow spiritual leaders but make sure they're biblical leaders. Make sure that not only their message but their methods and their character is meeting the Word of God's standards. It's so very important.

Paul said, "Someone has bewitched you." The word "bewitched" means to cast an evil spell upon. It has the idea of the evil eye, that you have come under this evil spell so to speak. They had been foolish, without understanding, and they'd come under this evil spell. Again, as a pastor, this is one of the things that concerns me so much that so many times people are lacking knowledge of God's Word and just lack discernment. That's something that only the Spirit of God can give you with the Word of God, the wisdom that comes from above. You need to pray, and as you pore over God's Word, that the Holy Spirit will teach, show, and lead you into all truth. You need to be careful that you're not following somebody that has cast a spell upon you. Whenever the Bible is preached or taught, the goal of the preacher or teacher is to take you into the text, take you into the Scripture, and let the Scripture speak for itself—to be hidden behind the text and let the text do the speaking—not to add to or take away from the Scriptures but simply to expound the truth in their historical, grammatical, and theological context. It's so very important.

The Galatians were foolish and bewitched, and then Paul also said, "...that ye should not obey the truth," he says, "If you're turning away," and they were turning away from the true gospel to the false gospel, they were actually disobeying the true gospel and true message. Paul had given them the truth, but they were disobeying it. Notice at the end of verse 1 he says, "...before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" As we open up our study in the book of Galatians, you might have remembered that I talked about how often and frequently, in these six chapters, Paul talks about the cross of Christ. Every time I study Galatians with that thought and emphasis, it just jumps out all through the epistle. The reason being because central to the gospel and the truth of the gospel is the cross of Jesus Christ. How does he start his whole doctrinal section? The very first verse? By saying, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you," he's saying, "You saw Jesus crucified before your own very eyes. Come to the cross, understand the cross, that Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sins. It is finished. All that is left for you to do is believe Jesus, to trust in Him."

You say, "Well, Pastor John, these people were from Galatia. How is it that he could say, '...before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?'" It was in Paul's preaching that he displayed to them the cross of Christ. This phrase in my King James translation, "...evidently set forth," has the concept of placard. It was used for a poster that

would announce an event or some message from the government, and it would be placard, or poster or placed, all around the city. We would call them posters with an announcement on it, so the idea that it was placard, the translation could be placard before you, before your very eyes.

What it's saying is that Paul, in his preaching, actually portrayed the historic event of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, then he actually went deeper into the cross to its meaning and significance. I've always felt that that's important to do whenever we study the historical narrative of the crucifixion or I'm preaching maybe a cross message or a Good Friday sermon. I always like to go to the epistles as well and talk about the meaning of the cross, that it's a propitiation, that it's there that He's reconciling us, that He's a substitutionary death for us, understanding that what the cross is—that He took our place bringing us back to God, He paid our penalty—and the significance of the cross. A church, a congregation, or an individual believer that stays close to the cross—stays focused on the cross and understands the meaning and the message of the cross—will not easily be led astray or bewitched, so keep your focus on the cross and what God did for you in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, as He died a substitutionary death for us that our sins may be forgiven.

You know when Jesus died on the cross, He cried, "Tetelestai," it is finished. For you to say that justification is not just by faith, it's also by works, is actually telling God the cross was not sufficient. It's an attack upon the cross. You're actually saying to Jesus, "It's not finished. It's not complete. I have to do something. I have to work at something. I have to be something. I have to add to the work of the cross," when in reality God says, "It is finished, nothing left for you to do but believe or receive what Jesus did for us on that cross."

You're going to notice in this text about six question marks. There's one in verses 1 and 2; two in verse 3; one in verse 4; and one in verse 5. In these first five verses, there are several questions here that Paul is going to ask them. What he's going to do first in verses 2-5, and it's important to know, is argue to them that they're saved by grace through faith based on their own experience. He's going to remind them of how they became Christians, what God did for them, and bring them back to answer these rhetorical questions that will get them thinking. They're foolish. They're not thinking. They lack understanding, so one of the best ways sometimes to teach somebody is to ask a question and get them to think about the answer so they can discover the truth of what you're trying to communicate. There's a series of questions that Paul is going to ask them based on their own experience.

Lest I forget, real quick, I'm just going mention it and then come back to it. Paul deals with their experience and then with Scripture. It's super important to understand that experience is wonderful, but it must be based on Scripture. We can't base what we believe on our subjective experience. Our belief must be based upon the Word of God and the Word of God alone. Many people have been bewitched, deceived, or led astray because they neglected an understanding of God's Word and placed all the emphasis on, "I saw it. I felt it. I heard it. I experienced it." Experience can be deceptive. It must be based upon God's Word. Paul appeals to their experience, and then he grounds it or founds it upon God's inerrant Word.

In verses 2-5, Paul argues from their experience. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" I want you to note the first question is in verse 2. He says, "How did you receive the Spirit? When you were saved? When you were born again? When you first became a believer? How did that happen? Did it happen because you performed and worked or you fulfilled rites or rituals?" No. He says, "You received it by faith." Go back to verse 2. He said, "This only would I learn of you," isn't this interesting. He calls them foolish in verse 1, which means without understanding, and then kind of tongue-in-cheek asks this rhetorical question, "I want to learn something from you. Tell me something." Well, wait a minute. You just said they're fools, and now you're asking them to tell you something. He's really trying to grab their attention.

I love the way Paul addresses them. He says, "I want to learn something from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" So, I have a question for you. Which is it? Did they get the Holy Spirit because they were circumcised, worshiped on Saturday, kept the Ten Commandments? Do we get the Holy Spirit because we're baptized or confirmed or we're going through catechism or we do certain rules, regulations, or laws in order to get the Holy Spirit?

By the way, no one is a Christian without the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as a Christian who does not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. Paul says that clearly in Romans 8. The answer to the question in verse 2 is by the hearing of faith. I want you to note that there are no other options—either you worked for it or God gave it to you by trusting Him. Isn't it interesting that there are no options. He doesn't combine works and faith together. He said, "Or maybe there's a third option. Maybe you got the Holy Spirit because you believed in Jesus but worked really hard and God says, 'That's great. Now I'm going to give you the Holy Spirit.'" Paul says, "No. Think about your own experience," and you and I can think about our own experience as well. When you were saved, what did you do to get the Holy Spirit? Here's the answer: You believed in Jesus Christ.

Something runs through this whole passage. It's marvelous, and again, I don't want to miss it. God never justifies anyone, which is declaring anyone righteous, without giving them the Holy Spirit. The moment you are justified, you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. They're one at the same time. As a matter of fact, there's a whole package of blessings that come to you the moment you believe in Jesus Christ. The moment that you believe, you're declared righteous, you're justified. The moment you believe, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The moment you believe, you are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. The moment that you believed, you are redeemed. You're made a child of God. The Bible says you're not only born into God's family, but you are adopted into God's family, which means you're placed as a full adult child of God and can begin to enjoy the benefits and blessings of being a true child of God.

Paul says, "Listen to me. When you got saved, when you became a Christian," verse 2, "it didn't

happen because you performed and did law or did certain things. You were believing by faith, you were justified, and you received the Holy Spirit.” They were, by the Spirit of God, justified; they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God as well. The minute you are believing in Jesus (remember that believing, trusting, and putting your faith in Jesus are all synonymous terms), it’s at that moment that you are justified and also indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You are sealed by the Spirit, and that sealing is security and ownership unto the day of redemption. The Bible says that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. You might break that down a little further and say, “I’m in Christ, declared righteous; Christ is in me, to make me righteous.”

I’ve talked about justification, sanctification, and glorification last Wednesday night, so we are justified because we’re in Christ; we’re sanctified, made holy and righteous, because Christ is in us. It’s a double blessing. Not only do I get placed in Christ and in Him I’m justified, I’m declared righteous, but Christ is now in me to make me righteous. That’s sanctification. We’re going to see in this passage that we are also sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit, but the point he wanted to make is, “Look, you received the Holy Spirit not by performing or by works but by believing.” Again, forgive me for coming back to baptism, but it’s a common rite or ritual that’s given to the church today that people get tripped up on thinking that you must be baptized to be saved or you maybe think that you have to take communion to be saved. Those things aren’t what you do in order to get the Holy Spirit. You don’t get baptized to get the Holy Spirit, you get baptized because you have the Holy Spirit. It’s very important to understand that. Paul makes it very clear that we’re saved by the work of the Spirit.

Again, I don’t want you to miss it, but in verse 1 we have a reference to Jesus Christ who is God the Son. In verse 2, and the first part of verse 3, we have a reference to the Holy Spirit, which is God the Holy Spirit. When we get down to verse 5, we’re going to have a reference to God the Father; so all three Persons of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—are mentioned in this passage.

Look at the second question that Paul asks in verse 3. It’s real short and quick. There are two of them in verse 3. He says, “Are ye so foolish?” He stops right there, and then he says, “having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” There are two question marks in that one verse, and he’s actually challenging them, “Are you so foolish,” and then says, “having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” This is very, very important. We are not only justified by faith, but we are also sanctified by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. You can’t begin in the Spirit and then say, “Okay, God, I’ll take it from here. You died on the cross for me. You paid for the penalty for my sins. You’ve forgiven me, now sit back and watch me perform.” The Lord would cover His eyes and just say, “I don’t want to watch!” After the crash and fall, we say, “Oh, God! Help me.” He says, “I’m glad you asked,” because we cannot live the Christian life apart from the Holy Spirit’s power.

I remember as an 18-year-old just out of high school getting saved and still kind of hanging out with my sin buddies. I hadn’t quite broken away from my old crowd. I remember one night I was at a party, and I wasn’t partaking of the sinful activity but was surrounded by all this sinful behavior. I was just thinking, Lord, this is not right. I can’t do this. I went home and got on my

knees by my bed and prayed. I cried out to God and said, “Lord, I can’t live the Christian life unless You help me. I can’t live the Christian life unless You give me the strength to take a stand to separate from my worldly friends to follow You.” It was a turning point from that point on as I sensed God’s power, strength, and God’s Spirit strengthening me to live the Christian life because I had this concept of it’s up to me now. You know, He saved me, now He wants me to live the Christian life not relying upon the Holy Spirit.

I love Ephesians 5:18 where we are commanded to “...be filled with the Spirit.” That command is a command. It’s an imperative. It’s in what’s called the passive voice in the Greek. What that means is: Let the Holy Spirit fill you. You can’t fill yourself, but you can surrender and yield to the Holy Spirit’s power. Paul basically says in verse 3 that not only did you get saved by believing through faith and received the Spirit, but you’re not going to be perfected now in the flesh. Nothing you do by the way of ceremonies, rites, rituals, law-keeping performance, adds to your justification. This is why it’s important to understand that justification is not progressional. It’s not something you grow deeper in. It’s complete. It’s full. It’s instantaneous, and you can’t add to it. All you can do is rest in it and thank God that you are complete in Christ, forgiven in Christ, you’ve been declared righteous in Christ; but you can’t become perfect now by the deeds of the law. That’s what a lot of Christians try to do. They try to work it up, do it themselves, and we miserably fail. Sanctification must come by the Spirit as well.

I’m just going to mention something, and, Lord willing, I’ll come back to it. I wanted to mention it last week. I want to be sensitive about this. The doctrines of justification and sanctification are convoluted and confused, and blended together by the Roman Catholic doctrine. They don’t teach that you’re justified by faith alone through grace alone. They believe that it also involves the sacraments and continuing in the sacraments—communion, catechism, confession, good works—so they never come to a full assurance of resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That’s why they have the Eucharist and take communion and all of the different things they must do in the sacraments because they convolute and confuse, and blend together the doctrine of sanctification and justification. It’s so very important. It’s one of the fundamental differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. It breaks my heart because there are so many dear, precious people in the Catholic church that love God, are devoted to God, want so much to be right with God, but are never told the true gospel of God.

I actually believe that the book of Galatians is perfectly suited for someone that’s steeped in Roman Catholicism and thinks that just believing in Jesus is not enough—that you have to work, perform, and try to be a good person. I’ve talked to Roman Catholics that argue that point, and they do so with a lot of focus and emphasis on that but haven’t really immersed themselves either in the book of Galatians or Romans to understand the doctrine of justification, sanctification, how those play two different roles, and the importance of how they work together. We are justified positionally; we are sanctified practically by the work of the Holy Spirit, not by our own good deeds.

Paul comes to his next question, verse 4. He says, “Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.” What he’s actually saying there is, “Look, you became Christians. You were

Gentiles. You believed the gospel of grace, and you actually endured persecution. You endured suffering. You endured opposition because you held this doctrine, and now you're going to go back to believing that you're saved by law keeping or that you have to become a Jew through circumcision, keeping the law of Moses, and following dietary laws in order to be saved?" He says, "All of your suffering, all of the opposition and persecution that you endured as a Christian, is all in vain if you fall back on believing what the Judaizers are teaching. You're basically saying that they're right, that the gospel of grace is wrong, and you are trying to escape the trouble and persecution that you have endured there in the cities of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe," and those cities where the churches of Galatia were.

If you read Acts 14, make a note of that, you'll get some background on these churches of Galatia where it describes the troubles and trials they went through. Actually, it says that they went through much tribulation to have to enter into the kingdom of God. Now, that's not the Great Tribulation that we are studying about on Sunday morning but a reference to the opposition of the world to the true believer. Jesus said, "If they hated Me, they're going to hate you." Paul is trying to show them, "Listen, you guys went through suffering and persecution, now you are forsaking the grace of God and faith in God for works," and says, "is it all in vain?"

Paul comes to his last question as he addresses their own personal experience. He says, verse 5, "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you," how does he do it? "doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" I believe that the "he" in verse 5 is a reference to God the Father. It's possible, but I don't think it's the case, that it's referring to maybe the apostles or their spiritual leaders that actually performed miracles as they preached. We read in the book of Acts 14 as well that when Paul and Barnabas were in Iconium and Lystra, that God used them to perform mighty signs, wonders, and miracles. Paul saw a lame man who had faith to be healed, and he said, "Jesus Christ makes thee whole," and lifts him to his feet and he walked. All the people of Lystra were so excited that they worshiped Paul and Barnabas. They thought they were gods come down in the likeness of men. But the "he" here seems to be a reference to the source of the working of the Spirit, the miracles that were performed, being that of God the Father.

The word "ministereth" in verse 5 means to supply abundantly. God the Father is the One that supplies His Spirit, performs the miracles, and does the work of the Holy Spirit through them. Again, it's not because you performed or you've done works, it's because you trusted in faith and believed. In verse 1, we have a reference to God the Son. In verse 2, we have a reference to God the Holy Spirit; and now, again, in verse 5, we have a reference to God the Father. Paul says, "How is it that you saw these miracles worked among you? Was that performed or done by works of the law?" The answer is: No, but by the hearing of faith. It was through faith that they saw God perform healings, miracles, signs, and wonders. Paul has argued that their own experience is that everything that came to them was come to them by faith.

It's pretty easy to make this basic theological principle, from this passage from many others: All of our blessings come to us by grace through faith. None of them are earned, merited, or deserved. If you're saved, if you have the Holy Spirit, if you're a child of God, to God be the

glory, great things He hath done. Amen? It isn't like, "Yeah, He saved me because I'm so intelligent," or "He saved me because I'm so good looking," or "He saved me because I'm so charismatic. He saved me because I'm so rich. He needed my money to help Him out." Sometimes we see somebody that's rich, famous, and charismatic and say, "Oh, man! They need to get saved because they would be so dynamic for God." I understand that, but God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. When you see somebody that's really a fool, say, "That's a candidate for the glory of God." God uses the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the despised things, "...and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." Amen?

All the blessings of God come to us by faith—by the grace of God, from the heart of God, just believing God—not performing or working. Quit trying to deserve, earn, or merit your blessings, and just let God bless you. Do you know what grace does? It often puts the least deserving in the highest favor. Sometimes we're like, "Well, God, why are You blessing them? They were worse than I was! They don't go to church as much as I do. I go on Wednesday night! Why are You blessing them, Lord? Why are You using them? Look at me, God. You're making a mistake here." We've got it all wrong. God doesn't use us because of who we are; God uses us for His glory. It's not ability, it's availability, and saying, "Lord, use me for Your Glory." I love the concept that all the blessings of God come to us by believing and receiving them by faith, not by working, deserving, meriting, or earning His blessings.

The second argument, we need to move along, is in verses 6-9. It is the scriptural argument. Paul references the Scriptures clearly in verse 8, but from verses 6 to the end of this chapter, he's going to quote, about six times, the Old Testament. This is where I drive home that point: Experience is a wonderful thing; but if you don't want to be bewitched, foolish, or led astray, make sure your experience is founded solidly on the Bible. The validity of your experience must be backed up, supported by, and grounded in the Word of God. You don't judge the Bible by your experience, you judge your experience by the Bible. You got that? Always. It's so very important. If not, you can be easily deceived or led astray.

In verse 6, Paul says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen," referring to the Gentiles, "through faith, preached," or proclaimed, "before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee," that is, Abraham, "shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Go back with me to verse 6. "Even as Abraham believed God," that's faith, "and," his faith, "was accounted," that's the doctrine of imputation, imputed, "to him for righteousness."

It's very important for you to get this. This is a reference to Genesis 15:6. I've already mentioned it in our study. When Abraham still had no children and was passed the age of bearing children, and his wife, Sarah, was passed the age of bearing children, he was probably discouraged because he had no one to give his inheritance or his wealth. God came to him one night and said, "Don't be discouraged, Abraham. I'm your shield. I'm your exceeding great

reward.” Abraham says, “Well, God, what good does it do me if I have no one to give it to?” God said, “Come out of your tent for just a minute,” (I’m paraphrasing, you can read it in Genesis 15) “and look up into the sky.” They had no city lights in those days. They were out in the desert.

If you’ve ever been to Israel down by the Dead Sea, the stars are amazing at night. God said, “Look up into the sky, and tell Me if you can number them.” They say—I don’t know—that with the naked eye you can see about three thousand stars in the night sky, but there are billions of galaxies with billions of stars. You can’t number them. They are innumerable. God says, “Can you number them?” Obviously, Abraham says, “No.” “That’s how many children you’re going to have,” God said. Abraham is thinking, (paraphrased), Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay! “Just one would do, Lord. I’m an old man. I’ve got to put an enlargement on the tent to try to figure this all out.” Just, “Ay-ay-ay, this is crazy!”

Abraham did not argue with God. He didn’t say, “No way, Jose!” Have You seen me? Have You looked at my wife? It’s not going to happen.” He believed God. Guess what? This is the first time in the Bible we have a reference to faith. It’s what’s called the first mention of faith. He actually believed God. I’m blown away by that! He believed God that he was going to have all these children. He was going to have a multitude of children and likened it and said, “As many as there are sands upon the seashore, innumerable in multitude,” God’s covenant promise to Abraham. God gave Abraham a promise. Abraham believed the promise, and God said to Abraham, “I declare you righteous.”

That is a powerful scriptural clear argument for justification by faith. Guess what? Abraham was not yet circumcised. Moses isn’t even on the scene yet, there’s no Ten Commandments. When someone says to you, “Well, you gotta keep the Ten Commandments, if you think you’re going to get saved,” or “You gotta become Jewish in order to be saved,” or “You gotta be circumcised.” Abraham wasn’t even circumcised yet. Abraham had not kept the law because it had not even been given yet, so what God did was imputed, and it’s clear in this Scripture (accounted in my King James Bible), to him for righteousness. That’s the same concept of God justified Abraham. How? By his faith. What this tells us—many things, but don’t miss this—is that there’s only one way for men to be saved whether it be Old Testament or New Testament. Christians mistakenly, too many times, have thought, Well, in the Old Testament, they got to heaven by keeping the law; but now that Jesus has come, we get to heaven by believing in Jesus. No, no, no, no, no. All the law could do was condemn you and show you your sin. It could never save anyone. Whether it’s Old Testament or New Testament, whether it’s a Jew or a Gentile, it doesn’t matter, there’s only one way to be saved—believing God’s promise. For us, God sent His Son to die on the cross and promised that our sins would be forgiven, if we trusted in Him; and what do we do? We believe Him! What does He do? He imputes righteousness to us! You say, “Well, it just can’t be that easy.” Well, it is! That’s what’s so awesome about it!

This may sound like simple stuff, but it’s not simplistic. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it centers in His finished work on the cross and believing God’s promise. It’s interesting that

Abraham had an object of his faith was God. The content of his faith was the helplessness of his own condition, trusting God in His power, in His promise; and it was before he was circumcised, and the results were that he was declared righteous. I've always loved this reference to Paul. Don't ever get into a biblical argument with Paul, he'll tear you to pieces. Paul may be alluding to some of the Judaizers who said, "If you really want to be a child of Abraham, if you really want to be Jewish, you gotta keep this rite of circumcision," and Paul says, "Look at Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, he believed God and God gave him righteousness."

Now, notice verse 7, "Know ye therefore," again, I believe that ties back to verse 1, "O foolish Galatians," you need to know something, verse 7, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." The Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be the children of Abraham because even the Jews physically, who didn't believe in God by faith, weren't the children of Abraham spiritually. The way to become a child of Abraham is by believing in God and trusting in His promise in the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. Paul says, "...they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham," not by becoming a Jew and keeping the law of Moses.

In verse 8, Paul quotes Scripture again, "And the scripture, foreseeing" that indicates that the Scripture was prophesying that God would do something. He would justify the Gentiles through faith. How did that happen? Before He preached, "...the gospel unto Abraham, saying," this is Genesis 12:3, "In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Now, we know this is part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. It's called the Abrahamic Covenant, and part of the promise He said, "I'll give you the land," and promised him the land and all that will be fulfilled in the Millennium, the Kingdom Age, that's why I'm a premillennialist. I believe the Second Coming is before the Millennium, and that's when Israel will get the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, Christ will sit on the throne. I don't think that should be spiritualized, that we're in the Millennium right now.

God also said, "Abraham, in you," and specified, "your seed," not seeds, but seed being singular. Paul says, which isn't really delineated in the Old Testament, but the same Holy Spirit that inspired the Old Testament and the covenant God made with Abraham inspired the New Testament and the Apostle Paul, and He points out that it's in the seed, singular, which is Christ, all the nations of the world will be blessed. Now, don't misunderstand that. It's not teaching universalism. It's not teaching that because God sent His Son Jesus Christ everyone is going to be saved—all nations will be saved, everyone is going to go to heaven. The Bible doesn't teach that, but what he's teaching is that no matter what ethnic group you're a part of or what nation you're from, whether Jew or Gentile, in context here, you can be right before God, you can be justified before God, like Abraham, by just simply believing God and His promise. That promise is fulfilled in his Seed which is Jesus Christ, so He would send the Messiah and those who believed in Him would be declared righteous or be justified.

Paul closes in verse 9, "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

That's a summary conclusion in verse 9. The question is: In what way are we blessed? The simple answer is, in light of the book of Galatians: We are justified and sanctified because He's given to us His Holy Spirit. There are two blessings that we get, like Abraham, through faith: the blessing of justification and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. What a blessing that is.

I'm going to mention it, but I'll get more into it when we get down to verse 14. There are those that I believe teach a false doctrine today in some branches of the church known as the Word of Faith doctrine. It's also known as the health and wealth doctrine—that if you're a Christian, if you have enough faith, that you won't ever get sick; that by faith you can live a perfectly healthy life, and that if you have enough faith, you'll be wealthy. It's called the health and wealth gospel. It's still quite popular. I won't name the names. I should, but I won't because I'm trying to wrap this up. It basically comes in all kinds of subtle forms, too, with a lot of popular preachers on television that, "God wants to bless and prosper you." One of the verses they use is our text, especially verse 14, "The blessings of Abraham." Do you know what they say the "blessings of Abraham" are? A new car, even though Abraham didn't have a car; a gold watch, a beautiful house, health and wealth.

Look at verse 14. I can't resist. We'll get there. He said, "That the blessing of Abraham," "Oh, there it is, again, the blessings of Abraham! Praise God!" They stop right there when they preach this verse. This is one of their favorite texts. I've heard many, many health and wealth prosperity preachers use this text, "The blessings of Abraham," stop right there and say, "That's money! Abraham was rich. He had lots of land. He owned everything!" That has nothing to do with the book of Galatians, and it's certainly not in the text, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," so we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Do you see the problems you can have if you don't take your Bible in context? One of the reasons why, as I introduce my study in Galatians every week that it has the context of false teachers who were denying the gospel of grace and so Paul is defending the gospel of justification by faith through grace, is because you need to keep everything in the book in context. He's not talking about the blessings of Abraham being health and wealth. The blessings of Abraham are that you get justified and you get the Holy Spirit and you are a true child of God, which is such a glorious, glorious truth.

What do we learn? We learn what the gospel is: It's Christ crucified, His finished work on the cross. We learn what the gospel offers: justification and the gift of the Holy Spirit, something the law could not do. It only condemns. We learn what the gospel requires: faith, only believe, not obey but believe. Amen?