

Galatians 3:1-9

Faith Alone

Good morning church. So very good to be back with you this morning as we continue our time of worship together in the Word of God. I hope that you had a great Thanksgiving. Ate too much. Watched some average to below average football. Enjoyed this incredible weather we've had the last week or two.

This morning, our time in the word of God brings us to Galatians 3 as we continue our verse by verse walk through the book of Galatians. And what we're looking at today, really is a continuation of Paul's argument that he started laying out in great detail last week – the message that is at the heart of the entire book of Galatians, that Christians are made right before God solely by faith alone.

This doctrine is so important – that Paul just keeps banging this drum all throughout the book. And for 2,000 years this has been the drum that has been banged by faithful preachers, faithful Christians. So important, Calvin said this doctrine is the hinge on which everything turns. Luther said that this doctrine is the one on which the church stands or falls. Because to miss this, misses the entire point of the Gospel.

And in the text that we're looking at today, we'll see how both our experience and the Scriptures affirm this truth. Turn with me, if you have a Bible or device, turn with me to Galatians 3:1-9

READ: Galatians 3:1-9

You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you,^[a] before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed^[b] as crucified?² I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard?^[c] ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh? ⁴ Did you experience^[d] so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing? ⁵ So then, does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law? Or is it by believing what you heard— ⁶ just like Abraham who **believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness?**^[e]

⁷ You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons. ⁸ Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, **All the nations^[f] will be blessed through you.**^[g] ⁹ Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.^[h]

PRAY

Paul's not wasting any words here. He calls it like he sees it – whether it was with Peter and Barnabas, or the rest of the church that should have known better.

I. Foolish Galatians

If we're not careful, we can miss all together the weight of this statement. Like for me, I think of the Trix commercial – Silly rabbit, Trix are for kids...But that's not what Paul's saying here. He's accusing them of being lazy and **having stopped thinking for themselves.**

One commentator puts it this way, as if Paul's saying "O you dear idiots of Galatia...surely you can't be so idiotic."

And what I'd say here, is that we don't check our brains at the door when we come to Christ. We use our minds, our intellects. We have to know what we believe, and why we believe it. And not to just take the preacher's word for it. To never stop thinking for ourselves. The worship of God should engage our minds. Absolutely should. Is it emotional, sure is. But it's also intellectual – **we can and should worship God with our minds.** Or we'd be the foolish Manasotans.

The Galatians – it was as if they'd fallen for a spell. And after addressing the foolishness of their error, Paul goes into their own personal experience.

II. Before Whose Eyes

Publicly Portrayed

- The picture here is like a public notice – or a public display for all to see
- Illustration – posting the permit or Notice of Commencement

The public portrayal of Jesus crucified – was through Paul's preaching and their belief. Paul didn't give them 6 steps to a happy marriage, happy life, financial freedom. **Paul gave them Jesus and Him crucified – for without this there is no Christianity. And their response to the offer of the Gospel, was also put on display for all to see.**

III. Receiving the Spirit

Re-read V2-3

Receiving the Spirit – all who believe, the Bible is 100% clear on this – that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all who believe. As basic Christianity – not some super extra special level of Christianity, but at the moment of belief, the Holy Spirit comes on the believer. Not on all who try harder. Behind Paul's words, we see this assumption that the Holy Spirit was already at work in the lives of the Galatians – as He is also at work in the lives of all who by grace through faith believe in the Jesus.

And the Galatian churches know this. They know their own experience with the Spirit. He asks them – if they started with the Spirit – what in the world would make them think they could continue or even finish by their own effort.

And I think there's a warning here for all of us. If we're not careful, we could try and do the things of God in our own power (or in the flesh to use Paul's word). And what I've found – just me – maybe you can relate to – what I've found is that when I try and do the things of God in my own strength without relying on the power of the Holy Spirit – I will be exhausted and a jerk. Exhausted because I'm not using the only real power available for the work of God. A jerk because I undoubtedly want the praise and want people to think how great I am; rather than pointing all praise to the Father.

Paul calls them foolish again – as if to say are you so stupid that you think you can continue in the Christian life, continue in the work of God in the world in your own strength. Well, to quote that great philosopher Forrest Gump “stupid is as stupid does.”

Because this idea – that we start by the Spirit but continue and finish by our own flesh – is contrary to the Gospel. Not just a small error here. Paul asks them – in essence – do you really misunderstand the Gospel so basically that you've made this error. Because the same Spirit that draws us to Jesus, the same Spirit that comes to us the moment we first believe, is the same Spirit that sustains us day by day, and grows us day by day to be more like Jesus.

So we have this testimony of our own experience with the Holy Spirit, the 3rd person of the trinity – and we also have the testimony of the scriptures. And to be clear, experiences are great and good – but we always must understand our experiences through the lens of scripture. We have to keep these together – to abandon the Scriptures for our own experience is how people and churches and families get led to abandon the faith all together.

In looking at the testimony of the Scriptures, Paul points to Abraham

IV. Abraham believed God

Re-Read V6-7

Abraham believed God – he took God at His word. Was Abraham perfect? No way. Not even close. But God called him, God made a promise to him, and Abraham took God at His word. He trusted in the character of God, and by faith was credited to him as righteous.

Now the false teachers at Galatia, almost certainly were talking up that they were children of Abraham as a result of their taking the OT sign of Judaism and obeying all of the law. But what they failed to fully understand was that Abe's position before God was due entirely to his faith – and nothing else. That God called him and he believed. God made a promise to him and he believed. But it's important to know here – **that his believing God wasn't just mental** – it worked its way out in how we lived. It passed from the head, to the heart, to the hands as I like to put it.

READ Hebrews 10:8-10

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and set out for a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents as did Isaac and Jacob, coheirs of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

READ Hebrews 10:17-19

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son, ¹⁸ the one to whom it had been said, **Your offspring^[g] will be traced through Isaac.**^[h] ¹⁹ He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking.^[i]

V7 – Abraham's sons → not about those who are following a bunch of rules, or who have done a bunch of things...but those we have believed God, those who have faith. Not about ethnic identity. Not about family heritage.

And had these false teachers truly known the Scriptures, they would've known that the Gospel was planned and always intended to be for the nations. Not a small group of people located in the middle east, but for all who would believe. All who by grace through faith would come to trust in Jesus.

CLOSING...

What about us. Will we choose to believe God, trust completely in Jesus and obediently follow Him. To keep trusting in Him. To allow the Spirit to lead us and the Word to guide us.

