

BEWITCHED OR BELIEVING**Galatians 3:1-25**

Intro: Recomputing. Kathy and I had this happening last week when we were trying to find our hotel in Mechanicsburg, PA (Explain)

Know what's worse than missing the directions from your GPS? Ignoring them-going your own way-it WILL mess you up. That was what the Galatians were doing. They knew the right way and not only that, they had received and accepted the right way, and then they proceeded to go their own way. Actually, it was an old and disproven way and Paul was astonished by their appalling foolishness.

As we continue our study of Galatians, Paul continues to knock them up the side of the head. The language of the text doesn't touch his amazement. "*You Foolish Galatians! You knew what was right and followed the wrong way.*" It's for sure that no one ever accused him of lacking passion. If I incorporated all the different translations of the first three words of our passage, the vast majority of them would use the word "foolish" as did the NIV, which is what I just read to you. Several others used are "stupid", "senseless" and "thoughtless". So, we could change it to "*You foolish and stupid and senseless and thoughtless Galatians!*" and we would still come up short in expressing Paul's incredulity at what the people of Galatia had done. When he first presented the Gospel to them, they had not been spoiled by the old way of thinking that he, in his previous life as a good Jewish scholar, had been steeped in. So, in a way, their conversion had been free of a step and maybe a little easier. But now they had fallen for the Judiazers' false and senseless message, and he felt like he had to go back to square one with them. As you can tell, from here and from what we've seen earlier, Paul is just a little miffed at them. They should have known better but they followed the false teachers. So, Paul buckles down and goes for broke. He wants them to go from bewitched to believing. And it's good advice for us too. Right away, in verse 1 he warns them to...

Keep your eyes on Jesus

- The word translated as "bewitched" in our text is a word that described the "evil eye" which is a mystical or even occult curse that many cultures across the centuries and around the region would have been very familiar with. Wikipedia describes it as "a curse or legend believed to be cast by a malevolent glare, usually given to a person when they are unaware. Many cultures believe that receiving the evil eye will cause misfortune or injury." Paul put's no stock in such a thing – instead he sarcastically casts aspersions on people who knew they were busted. But he goes on to say, *Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.* (v. 1a) and makes a play on words. You see, the best way to avoid the evil of an evil eye is to not look into it. Look away and avoid the trouble. (Tell about not looking at Daddy to keep from laughing)
- The point is, when you are in danger of being bewitched, hoodwinked, or otherwise deceived, KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS!!! The Galatians had looked away for but a moment and had driven off the track.
- It's like this – you can go one way or the other . . .

Believe and receive the Spirit or DO and fall far short

- It raises a good question, why, when we have the Spirit, do we go back to the flesh? Why do we pick up what is God's to do and try to do it ourselves?
- Don't do God's work. For one thing, you can't and for another, why would you? Paul's word to the Galatians is trust in Christ's finished work, and it's our word too. Instead we should...

Follow Abraham's Example

- In Genesis 15 we find Abraham at nearly 100 years of age and childless, and God promises to him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the desert sky above him. Abraham is understandably puzzled when God says to him, "*Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.*" Genesis 15:5 but it says in the next verse, *Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.* Genesis 15:6. Abraham didn't second-guess God, or put his own spin on it or recompute it, he believed and it's true. Not only did he have children who became God's chosen children of Israel, but through Jesus Christ, the Galatians and us too, are descendants of Abraham.
- ALL nations would be blessed because of him and his example. All nations were part of the plan from the get-go – from the beginning it was the promise. That was the promise then, and it's the promise now.

- That is why Paul points out in verses 10-12 that we can rely on the Law and fall, or believe like Abraham and live. The danger of relying on the Law is that apart from Christ, we are lost. It's that simple. So, Paul's plea to the foolish Galatians is simple...

Jesus took our place – allow him to do that for you

- Allow the Holy Spirit to finish what Jesus started – don't just believe about him, believe IN him. Accept what he brings – the perfect sacrifice.
- That's why the Cross is not just a past fact – it's a present reality. Jesus took the curse upon himself so that we would escape it. His sacrifice was once for all and we don't have to keep going back for another one year after year like the Law required. Its incredible the Galatians fell for it, and it's worse if we do. I guess its human nature though, we think we just need to do . . . SOMETHING! But really, we don't. Because...

What's done is done – God did the work – allow it to work in you

- I said it earlier, don't do God's job. Humanity was lost, there needed to be a way out. Jesus made a way. God did it – that's good enough – that is all that is needed. Paul makes it clear in verse 20 – no mediator is needed – God said it, BOOM! That's it!
- We are inheritors of the promise and yet, like the Galatians, we make it so difficult. Don't! Instead . . .

Conclusion: Live the promise. Promise is a word that we see in this passage time after time. It's intentional. Paul wants his readers, in 50 AD and 2018 AD, to take the promise over the Law. And then live in the freedom that comes with faith.

That is probably one of the biggest reasons for Paul's astonishment at the Galatians. He couldn't understand why anyone could be free and walk back into bondage. He was an extraordinary man and no doubt very disciplined. Maybe he thought everyone could be as dedicated as he was. Everyone should be, but not everyone is. So, I want this to be encouragement for all of those people like me, who flirt with bondage when freedom is right there within our grasp. Latch onto it! It's free, that's a promise. Don't be bewitched. Believe! Amen.