

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

[www.sermonaudio.com/crc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crc)

[www.unholycharade.com](http://www.unholycharade.com)

[www.lightfordarktimes.com](http://www.lightfordarktimes.com)

## ***Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ***

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

***“Don’t be a Fool”***

**October 27, 2013**

**Sermon Text:** Galatians 3

**Scripture Reading:** Genesis 15

**Introduction-**

**O Foolish Galatians**

Are you ever foolish? Have you ever thought to yourself, “how could I have fallen for that?” Well, we all need to admit that we have been duped at one time or another, and that we must be

on careful guard or it will happen again. Just like happened to the Galatians.

We come now to the next section of Paul’s epistle which extends from verse 1 down through verse 9 in chapter 3. Here, Paul actually returns to his opening subject:

Galatians 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--

You will remember that Paul had left off this main subject to go to lengths to show the Galatians that the gospel he had preached to them by which they had been saved came to him *by revelation from Jesus Christ*, and is not any creation of man. Having established this thoroughly, he once more deals with them directly and pastorally:

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was

before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

What do we see here? –

- Christians can be foolish
- Christians can be bewitched

I can be foolish. I can be bewitched by lies. I need to admit this. It is dangerous to deny it. We dare not be careless as so many have before us:

Of all the diseased and vicious doctrines of the papacy the worst is this: **“If you want to serve God you must earn your own remission of sins and everlasting life, and in addition help others to obtain salvation by giving them the benefit of your extra work-holiness.”** Monks, friars, and all the rest of them brag that besides the ordinary requirements common to all Christians, they do the works of supererogation, i.e., the performance of more than is required. This is certainly a fiendish illusion.

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1167-1171). Kindle Edition.

We also see here in 3:1 that:

- There are “bewitchers” who will seek out the foolish

**Baskaino:** to deceive a person by devious and crafty means, with the possibility of a religious connotation in view of the literal meaning 'to bewitch'

It was as if these Galatians had been placed under an evil spell. Why was Paul so astonished? Because:

*“It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.”*

Paul is referring here to the effectiveness of His preaching to them. The Holy Spirit so impacted them as they heard the gospel that it was as if they were standing at the Cross, witnessing the whole event.

While this word “bewitched” may have some magical connotations, Paul is referring to the deceptive, blinding tactics of these false teachers. We should review some of these lest we find ourselves spellbound by such kinds:

False teachers work to bring us under the spell of a false gospel by:

- Offering a message that is pleasing to man,

- They flatter and “make much” of us (4:17)
- Foisting themselves off on us as being “angels of light.” Fine Christians.

Then, once the spell is cast – they set the hook by presenting a false gospel that always involves some kind of works righteousness. Their goal is self-serving. They want us to worship them. They want us, they want our money, but they do not serve Christ.

Galatians 2:4-5 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in-- who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery-- (5) to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

The Scriptures are filled with these kinds of warnings. Did you ever notice this one:

2 Corinthians 11:25-26 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; (26) on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger

in the wilderness, danger at sea, **danger from false brothers;**

I believe that I can correctly state that 1) We too often believe that we are far too wise to be taken in – to be bewitched, and 2) that surely such false brothers and spies could never come to or be in this church.

Satan is clever. He does not only bewitch men in a crude manner, but also in a more artful fashion. He bedevils the minds of men with hideous fallacies. Not only is he able to deceive the self-assured, but even those who profess the true Christian faith. There is not one among us who is not at times seduced by Satan into false beliefs. This accounts for the many new battles we have to wage nowadays. But the attacks of the old Serpent are not without profit to us, for they confirm our doctrine and strengthen our faith in Christ. Many a time we were wrestled down in these conflicts with Satan, but Christ has always triumphed and always will triumph. Do not think that the Galatians were the only ones to be bewitched by the devil. Let us realize that we too may be seduced by Satan.

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1133-1138). . Kindle Edition.

Here is more from Luther:

Since the devil has this uncanny ability to make us believe a lie until we would swear a thousand times it were the truth, we must not be proud, but walk in fear and humility, and call upon the Lord Jesus to save us from temptation. Although I am a doctor of divinity, and have preached Christ and fought His battles for a long time, I know from personal experience how difficult it is to hold fast to the truth. I cannot always shake off Satan. I cannot always apprehend Christ as the Scriptures portray Him. Sometimes the devil distorts Christ to my vision. But thanks be to God, who keeps us in His Word, in faith, and in prayer. The spiritual witchery of the devil creates in the heart a wrong idea of Christ. Those who share the opinion that a person is justified by the works of the Law, are simply bewitched. Their belief goes against faith and Christ.

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1145-1151). Kindle Edition.

Paul now begins his work of bringing them out from under this bewitching spell. He does so by asking them 4 questions in rapid succession, then giving them an example from the experience of Abraham:

Galatians 3:2-5 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--

Now what is the common phrase in these questions?

*“by hearing with faith”*

These Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. Was this evidenced in some visible manner? We aren't told. But the presumption is that they all were quite certain that they had indeed received the Holy Spirit when Paul ministered to them. The Spirit is Christ in them. Having the Spirit is equated with justification. With what Paul just described back in 2:20.

Hendriksen paraphrases Paul's first question this way:

*“Was it as a result of law-works that you received the Spirit, or was it as a result of faith-inspired listening?”* Salvation by works vs salvation by faith. The answer is obvious to them.

Secondly, Paul asks them: *“And if you had your new birth in Christ by simply hearing the gospel and believing it, do you really think that now you must perfect yourself by doing works in your own flesh/effort?”*

It was the Spirit who birthed them through faith in Christ and it is the Spirit by whom they will be sanctified (perfected), not by doing the law. NOTE: It is possible that the heretical teachers troubling the Galatians used this word “perfected,” and Paul is using it purposefully here to refute them. “Faith in Christ is fine, but (the heretics say) to be perfect you must....”. The Spirit birthed us by faith and He will mature us.

Now as God gave the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles without the Law by the simple preaching of the Gospel, so He gave the Holy Ghost also to the Jews, without the Law, through faith alone. If the righteousness of the Law were necessary unto salvation, the Holy Ghost would never have come to the Gentiles, because they did not bother about the Law. Hence the Law does not justify, but faith in Christ justifies.

How was it with Cornelius? Cornelius and his friends whom he had invited over to his house, do nothing but sit and listen. Peter is doing the talking. They just sit and do nothing. The Law is far removed from their thoughts. They burn no sacrifices. They are not at all interested in circumcision. All they do is to sit and listen to Peter. Suddenly the Holy Ghost enters their hearts. His presence is unmistakable, “for they spoke with tongues and magnified God.” Right here we have one more difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law does not bring on the Holy Ghost. The Gospel, however, brings on the gift of the Holy Ghost, because it is the nature of the Gospel to convey good gifts. The Law and the Gospel are contrary ideas. They have contrary functions and purposes. To endow the Law with any capacity to produce righteousness is to plagiarize the Gospel. The Gospel brings donations. It pleads for open hands to take what is being offered. The Law has nothing to give. It demands, and its demands are impossible.

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1193-1203). Kindle Edition.

Which is it then? Are we justified by our own performance of the law? Is that how the Spirit comes to a sinner

and gives them a new heart? Of course not. It is by faith alone from first to last. Faith alone in Christ alone. It is by the works of Christ that we are justified, not our own works. Our work is simply to hear of Christ and believe. That is our new life in Christ. Daily. By faith. We live this new life by faith in Christ. We rest in it.

The heart of man finds it difficult to believe that so great a treasure as the Holy Ghost is gotten by the mere hearing of faith. The hearer likes to reason like this: Forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, the gift of the Holy Ghost, everlasting life are grand things. If you want to obtain these priceless benefits, you must engage in correspondingly great efforts. And the devil says, "Amen."

We must learn that forgiveness of sins, Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are freely granted unto us at the preaching of faith, in spite of our sinfulness. **We are not to waste time thinking how unworthy we are of the blessings of God. We are to know that it pleased God freely to give us His unspeakable gifts. If He offers His gifts free of charge, why not take them?** Why worry about our lack of worthiness? Why not accept gifts with joy and thanksgiving?

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1238-1244). Kindle Edition.

**NOTE:** Here is a point of application for us as a church. This is Christ's church. He brought it into existence and drew us together. He birthed it, and He must grow it – whatever that "growth" entails. Therefore we must always be certain that it is the Spirit of Christ who is leading us into some ministry. The temptation for a church is the same as that of individual believers – to seek perfection by the flesh. By our own strivings and gimmicks and doings. And that, Paul says, is foolishness. What we can and must do is to pray earnestly that the Spirit of the Lord might lead us into the work He has for us.

Just a couple of more comments on verses 4-5 and then we will introduce Paul's wonderful teaching about Abraham and the promise to Abraham – which is in many ways the very central storyline of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and one of my favorite subjects.

1. Verse 4 – what about this "suffering"? Apparently the Galatians had suffered in some way when Paul had preached to them and they believed. The letter to the Hebrews gives us some idea of the specific

kinds of sufferings the early Christians suffered, mostly initially at the hands of the Jews:

Hebrews 10:32-34 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, (33) sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. (34) For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Was that all for nothing, in that now they are at the verge of deserting Christ? Paul seems to soften the punch a bit and show them he believes better of them by adding “if indeed it was in vain” (i.e., but I prefer to believe you really did believe).

2. And then we have in verse 5 a reference to the visible, mighty workings of the Holy Spirit that they experienced when Paul preached the gospel and they believed it. They DID nothing to make a miracle happen! The Spirit did it. They just heard the gospel and believed. All by faith. That is how the Spirit of Christ works.

**NOTE:** WE need desperately to know this. WE want a mighty working of the Spirit too! He has performed one such work – He has saved us! But we do want to see others brought to salvation, and we want to be used by Him for His glory. But He will not be manipulated and controlled by our doings:

John 3:6-8 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (8) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So listen again carefully to verse 5-

Galatians 3:5 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--

The Galatians heard the gospel, believed it, and the Spirit swept upon them. They didn't “do” anything to make it happen or to make themselves somehow worthy of Him.

It is the same today. I think this is where believing prayer is so vital, and we need to take a very hard look at it and how we might be deficient in it.

Prayer, you recall, *is the language of faith*. When we don't pray, we aren't believing. Yet if there is one "work" that we are called to, it is faith and belief in Christ! We live our life in Christ by faith. Therefore, the language of faith – prayer – is surely vital. Someone might ask me "well, pastor, what plans do you have to grow this church? Something needs to happen. There must be things that you need to get cracking on. Look around. Look at the big names and how they have all these programs and strategies. Let's get going!"

*"And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

What is God doing in the world? In this community? What does He want to do? I don't know. As for us, His present plan might be to show us our weakness so that we can stop trusting in ourselves and drive us to realize that our faith must be in Him alone. THIS – what you see here now – may be His plan! But we surely can and must talk to him in the language of faith – prayer – and ask Him to use us as He will. To guide and direct us to what He wants. That is not passivity. It isn't some erroneous "quietism" which is some pious sounding excuse for doing nothing. Prayer is very, very active.

Could this be what this verse means then? –

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (27) And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Ephesians 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

I don't pretend to understand what praying in the Spirit means. But notice the intimate connection of the Spirit with our prayers. We don't know. The Spirit does. The Spirit knows the will of God. He knows what God wants for us and what He would do through us. Prayer in the Spirit is surely a humble praying. It is a reliance upon the Spirit who knows, to show and lead us – who don't know.



I think that Jude 20, by the way, is God's definitive will for every Christian and for every church. It very concisely describes His "philosophy of ministry" for us.

- Be at work building ourselves up in the faith (through the Word),
- Praying in the Holy Spirit

You see the very same thing emphasized back in Acts: the ministry of the Word of God and Prayer.

And it is ALL of faith, not works, not gimmicks.

### **Just As Abraham... 3:6ff**

Listen now as we read the rest of chapter 3, starting at verse 6, where Paul turns to the gospel in the Old Testament: Abraham and the Promise. Make no mistake – understand this subject and you will understand the Bible! (Chapter 4 also mentions Abraham).

Galatians 3:6-29 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. (15) To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. (16) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. (17) This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (18) For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer

comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. (19) Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. (20) Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. (21) Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

There it is! The whole package! That is how God saves sinners. And it is all of faith, from beginning to end. Always has been. The Law came later, after the Promise, but not as a change to the Plan.

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." (2) But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (3) And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." (4) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." (5) And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (6) And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

That's it! That simple. Believed. Justified. Done. BEFORE he was ever circumcised.

And so it is with us. With you. Faith alone in Christ alone. The work is

finished. Christian, you began your new life in Christ through faith. Now, live it every day through faith. Christ is yours. The Promise is fulfilled to you. You are in Christ and therefore you are a son of Abraham. And if you are his son, then you are his heir. And if you are an heir, you have an inheritance. All the blessings, all the full salvation, all of the New Creation, is yours.

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.