

LSB Galatians 3:1 -

O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the 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 for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing? 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

I am so very excited this morning by this passage of scripture we have before us. This is solid meat, and such that it is a feast for those of us who are starved. This is the nitty gritty here. So much that can help us, and even perhaps change us as a body and a fellowship together, if the Lord see's fit to do that.

Paul has spent two chapters laying the foundations of his apostolic authority. Let no one doubt that Paul is the real deal. An apostle, called to that special position of authority in laying the foundational truths of the new covenant, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

To get an idea of Paul's special position in church history, think about what Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16.

15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Matt. 16:15 - 19

You say, what does that have to do with Paul. Simply this. Flesh and blood did not reveal the message that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built upon. God revealed that to Peter. And upon that rock, the revelation of the new covenant, the church would be built.

Paul is likewise that rock whom Jesus has revealed the revelation of the New Covenant in Christ's blood that will be brought to the gentiles and turn the world upside down. Paul has the same apostolic authority as Jesus gave to Peter in that section I read to you.

It has nothing to do with the powers of personality of either Peter or Paul, it is built upon God's choice to reveal the unveiling of the new covenant of the church, independent from Israel, by chosen apostles who will be the foundation of the church built upon the Rock who is Christ.

Today, 20 centuries later, if we are going to battle the same problem that Paul had to fight in Galatia, we open up the word of the apostles to do our battle. Paul was the chosen instrument to receive this word and to write it down for us who follow later. That was apostolic authority.

When the church was established and the new covenant was written down, the apostles left us, along with the sign gifts that established the new covenant in that first century time frame.

But Paul has had to give us two chapters, rebuilding that apostolic authority that has been brought into question by false teachers, sent by Satan, to upset the new work of the Church of God begun by Paul in the regions of galatia.

We don't need to visit that again. Paul has unequivocally established that in half a dozen different proofs in chapters one and two. Now it's time to get down to the business of the opening blast of this letter from ch. 1:6 - 9.

6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, 7 which is really not another, only

there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to the gospel we have proclaimed to you, let him be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed! Gal. 1:6 - 9

Paul doesn't beat around the bush here. And when we get at the threat of a tier one foundational salvation issue that would stall the church in place and stop it in it's tracks, we get out all of the guns and go to war. This is life and death. This issue has the power to undo everything that God has accomplished. If that were possible given the gates of hades promise.

But God uses His Paul's to drive back the gates of hades in this epistle. And we are literally thankful to God that this letter is written down and preserved intact for us to use to this very day. Take that, Hades. The Lord rebuke you via the words of the apostle Paul. To this day.

And now, apostolic authority in place, Paul gets down to the business at hand in vs. 1 of chapter 3. He's going to address their desertion. They were deserters. Christ deserters. *deserting Him who called you*

1. O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you,

Foolish galatians! I had to look up the word for fools here. Because in Matthew 5 on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says; We aren't to call our brothers *fool* in anger.

21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not murder' and 'Whoever murders shall be guilty before the court.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Matt. 5:21,22

That is the word Mōre from which we still get our word moron to this day. It's a word used that comes from a heart of murder. Angry words about someone else. That's not Paul's choice here.

Foolish galatians is the word; anoētos an-o'-ay-tos It's actually kind of an endearing word. J. B. Phillips translated this, Oh galatians, you beloved idiots. And Jesus used this word on the road to Emmaus with His two fellow travelers who were upset and depressed over Jesus crucifixion and death. Remember? Jesus said to them; *Oh, foolish men, and slow of heart to believe.* Lk. 24:25

So Paul isn't in danger of the fires of hell here, he's in good company calling out his beloved dumbbells. You idiots! You dull, slow, not too bright do-do's. And there is some severity here. Paul's not laughing. He's saying how can you be this stupid. How can you be dumb enough to fall for this!

You answered that email with all of the mis spelled words and the capitol letters in the middle of words and all the other tip-off's. You were stupid enough to fall for *that??!!!*

How does that happen?? Next word. *who bewitched you*

You left your senses behind and followed the pied piper over a cliff. That's what bewitched means. Charmed. Like the fool in proverbs 6 who is captured by a womans eyelids. To be bewitched is to be charmed. Captured and carried away. To fall into a snare.

*23 For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life
24 To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the foreign woman.
25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her capture you with her eyelids.*

This kind of a "reproof for discipline" from the apostle are what Solomon called the way of life. We need shepherds like Paul to rebuff us when we are foolish and steer us back onto the narrow path.

Bewitched. These galatians have been bewitched, not by women who paint their eyelids, but by smooth talking false teachers who come offering them a better gospel than Paul's. One that appeals to their pride.

Can christians be bewitched. Charmed. Captured? Yes. And I spent some time this week thinking about this truth.

What if, Satan can bewitch real christians? Do they lose their salvation. No, but consider this. They lose the spiritual ability to reproduce in kind, like, christians.

So Satan will use this bewitching, this charming away from the truth, and then he only has to wait for a generation. Right. Charmed christians become impotent christians. No more new christians. Then you just wait.

I started to list some of the things I have seen in 52½ years as a christian. Here are some pitfalls that came to my mind that can cause a sort of impotence. These are some modern bewitchments that carry off christians and make them neutered.

Sign gifts. Christians who get so enamored by the so-called charismatic gifts, speaking in tongues, miracles, prophecies, which I will argue have ceased, but christians get charmed, bewitched by those things, and that's all they can think about from that time forward. All of their energy is used up on nonsense. They get caught up in the pursuit of ecstatic feelings. Ecstatic excitement.

A second one I have witnessed. Future prophecy. People get bewitched by the very real area of prophecy's in the bible that are yet future, and it's a charm that becomes so powerful, nothing else matters. The only conversations they're interested in is whether the scorpions with the stingers

in their tails are some kind of helicopter gunships or perhaps these days with the newest technology they are drones and who the latest possible anti-christ is.

Is Pope Francis the antichrist. Maybe it's Putin. Obama was looking pretty good for a while. Born in 1961 just like Jeane Dixon said. To midwest people (currently living in Hawaii but no matter). It's a charm that charms you away from what's really relevant and important. Useless speculations.

Politics is a charm for some christians. Never mind Jesus, we can save the world and make Amurica great again, and make it safe for christians by politics.

Liberal christianity is a charm. We can placate the culture by merely tweaking the scriptures a teensy little bit (which guts all of it). We're astonished that the world hates real christians and if we could just show some sympathy and solidarity with some of the current cultural causes, the world would like us again. We are charmed to downplay things that are crystal clear in scripture, or better yet get some scissors and cut those problem passages out of our bibles.

Another charm that bewitches christians is legalism. The opposite side of the liberal coin. Legalism is the modern equivalent of what these galatians had signed up for. Fleishy prideful legalistic rules keeping. Devoid of the Holy Spirit. Cold judgemental rules keepers who scowl at everyone else not as elevated as they are.

Pragmatism is a charm. What is pragmatism? Manipulation by method. Formulaic christianity. The constant enterprise of following after the latest gimmick that's "working" in scare quotes. Mega church 101. Manipulate emotions, no Holy Spirit required, God doesn't need to get involved, we've got this. Theatre lighting. Smoke machines. Very loud contemporary music with chord structures that can wrench an emotional response, devoid of God.

Start out with upbeat bright cheery music and get people hopping. Then slow it down and get them swaying back and forth, and finally get the chords going that make them weepy. Presto. Holy Spirit! Or is it bewitchment? Music can charm. No Holy Spirit necessary.

I went to a Christmas eve service with my grandson in Reno and his other grandpa was hopping and swaying and weeping and looking at me like, wow, this guy is a cold stone. Not at all. I want to hop and sway and weep, but I'm very conscious of manipulation. I left there disturbed. Lucky for me I had a coughing attack and had to excuse myself to the parking lot for a few minutes.

No gospel was preached. No one got saved on Christmas eve. But everyone went home having felt good. Those little flashlight candles that probably have covid germs from the previous service on them. The lights go down and the fake candles all get lit and everyone goes Oooh. Ahhh. It feels good. That's a charm. It's empty. Like the wizard at Oz in his booth.

Psychology is a charm. We are bewitched by modern psychology. Since the Holy Spirit has left the room, we've replaced Him with psycho babble. There is a multi billion dollar business in christian books full of psycho babble. It's big business. Take the worlds psychology and christianize it. Christians are bewitched by the plethora of counselors.

Don't misunderstand me. No one wants the affections, the excitement, the tears, the overflowing heart more than I do. But it has to come from the single source. God brings those things, those affections, via His Holy Spirit, when He pleases, for His purposes and pleasure.

There are two parallel passages, one in Ephesians, and one in Colossians. In Ephesians it is the filling of the Holy Spirit that gives the fruits. In Colossians those same fruits are followed by Paul's words, *let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.* Col. 3:16

The psalms, hymns and spiritual songs come from the word of Christ

dwelling richly in me. That's the same thing as being filled with the Holy Spirit. I'm after the real thing, not the man made bewitching stuff. That's also why I wear you out pouring in the word of God, week after week after week. I'm after the real and I won't settle for bewitchings and charms.

Listen to Paul as he writes to the Ephesian christians about spiritual gifts. This passage describes God's plan for His people to not get bewitched.

*11 And He Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ, 14 **SO THAT we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming,***

Eph.4:11-14

The galatian christians had been bewitched away from the path clearly spelled out by Paul in that last section I read. They were following a pied piper down a dead end road to nowhere. They had become; *children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming*

Deadly stuff. Because even if those who are real believers who have been caught up in this folly continue in it, the gospel from that point on is rendered impotent. So that first generation of actual christians who were bewitched dies off and there's no real christianity generated beyond them. Satan says, my work here is done. Welcome to the catholic church.

Real christianity is neutered. That was Satan's hope, but the apostle comes to shake these folks out of their bewildered dazed and confused bewitchment. And his beginning argument is not so much theological, he'll get to plenty of theology in this book, but initially he appeals to their experience.

O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

What does that mean? *before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?*

Jesus explains to Nicodemus the idea of an object of faith that can save in John chapter 3 when He takes Nicodemus back to the serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness. The children of Israel were perishing by snake bites because of their sinfulness. God had sent snakes to bite them and many were dying.

Moses intervened for them and God told him to fashion a bronze snake up on a pole and those who were bitten and dying could look upon that bronze snake and be healed.

Jesus uses that idea as an illustration, a type, of the healing power of the substitutionary death He was about to offer for our healing.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

When Paul got to galatia that was his message. You are condemned in your sins but there is healing available. Jesus Christ, crucified for you, in your place. Look to Him like the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent. We gaze on Christ crucified and our faith rests on Him, the crucified Christ, for our forgiveness for sins and eternal life with God. Christ crucified and raised up again is the object of our faith.

Paul came to galatia and said, look to Christ for salvation. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, as the old song says. That was the public proclamation before their eyes for their faith to rest upon. Christ, crucified. And they did. Their spiritual eyes, through faith, were gazing on Christ alone. Publicly

proclaimed as crucified. For us. In our place. Payment for our sins.

Until the judaizers came and diverted their gaze to Moses. You can't be saved gazing at the finished work of Christ. You've gotta do stuff to be spiritual. You've got to embrace Moses and become jews before Christ can help you. And their eyes left Christ alone and they fell under the spell of a bewitching false doctrine of good works in order to please God.

They had abandoned Christ, for Moses. Utter insanity. Charmed by a bewitchment. They've left Christ crucified and are following some pied pipers busying them with works, gazing on Moses law and all of the ceremonies, instead of Christ who had perfected and completed all of that.

You're fools! You're bewitched by charmers! You've quit gazing on Christ alone and are marching to some pied pipers that have got you gazing on Moses and the law. Two mutually exclusive systems of faith for salvation. Christ crucified in your place for your sins. Moses law, which can only kill you. Which is it going to be?

2 This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

This is the bombshell. Think back to your experience. Something amazing happened. The Holy Spirit fell on these believers and quickened them from death to life. The Holy Spirit literally called them out of this dead world, and made them alive, together with Christ, and made them citizens of His kingdom. His authority to reign. Out of Satan's grasp, into Christ's loving embrace, by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It was real! There were fireworks in these first century pioneering churches. The Spirit was attended by miracles and wonders. Speaking in tongues, perhaps, we don't know. But during Paul's missionary journey's as God's called out ones heard and believed Paul's message of Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, the Holy Spirit attended their belief with miracle signs and wonders. Amazing. Paul will allude to this in a verse 5.

But his initial argument is, remember the beginning. The Holy Spirit came and indwelt you and quickened you from death to life, and Christ dwells in your hearts, from day one, and what caused that to happen?

2 This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

The evidential experiential proof that something marvelous happened in your midst, is the Holy Spirit. What was the cause? Works of the law? or Hearing with believing?

He rhetorically asks, did you **receive** the Spirit. Of course they had received the Holy Spirit, but the question refers back to how that happened. What was the cause of the event. The coming and receiving of the Holy Spirit.

What does that mean? What occurs when someone receives the Holy Spirit like these folks had. Setting aside the cause itself for a moment, we need to pause and establish what this means. To receive the Holy Spirit. To possess the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ, by receiving the Holy Spirit.

It's the dividing line between saved and lost. Christians and non-Christians.

Romans 8:9 *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if** indeed the Spirit of God dwells **in** you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

2 Cor. 13:5 *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is **in you**—unless indeed you fail the test?*

Eph. 2:1 *And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of*

*disobedience, 3 among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us **alive together with Christ***

There are only 2 kinds of people. Those who are dead in their transgressions and sins, and those who have been made alive together with Christ. Those who are alive, in Christ, are together with Christ, because of the communion of His Spirit with our spirit which was formerly dead.

The Spirit of God quickens our dead spirit to life and then dwells in us ever afterwards. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Paul tells the Colossians; Col. 1:25b *I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God given to me for you, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.*

If Christ is not dwelling IN you, you simply are not a christian. These galatians are christians. Christ does dwell in them. And Paul says, think back now, class, how did it happen that the Spirit came to dwell IN YOU? Did the works of the law do that? Or was it believing with faith in the crucified Christ that I publicly portrayed and declared by proclamation to you all.

Paul's argument is for them to return to the root cause of their salvation experience. What caused the Spirit of Christ to come and dwell inside your hearts. Think, think, think . . . Was it Moses law that did that? Or was it believing in the finished work of the crucified and risen Christ on your behalf that did that.

The answer is obvious! It is in fact a rhetorical question. There's only one possible answer, given in the question itself. The miracles of rebirth, the

quickenings of dead spirits to life, together with Christ, inside of their hearts, the blessings of new life IN Christ, from the indwelling Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, the weight of sin lifted from them and the joy of a relationship with Creator God, restored, all of it, and more, came to them upon receiving the Spirit of Christ in themselves caused by their hearing Paul's proclamation with faith.

Step two in Paul's unassailable logic comes like a slap in the face. Like a bucket of cold water waking up a drunk. Whoosh!

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Oh, by the way, for all the tone police, Paul is shouting here. He's poured cold water on you to wake you from your slumber, your drunken bewitchment, shocked back to your senses, and now he's going to shout at you. For your good.

Are you SO foolish.

Picture a farmer, a hundred years ago, he's never owned an automobile, so he goes to town and buys a Model T Ford, and the dealer says, you pull this hickey back and give her a little throttle so she won't die getting under way and then you mash that pedal there and shove the brake handle forward and off she goes with a lurch. Then when she gains a little speed you let that pedal come up and you're in high gear. And from time to time you lift up the seat cushion and you pour in some more gasoline. That's what makes the motor go.

Magic. Then your neighbor down the road stops by and tells you, that gasoline looks just like water to me. Pour in some water and see if she'll go.

Are you so foolish! Having begun with gasoline are you going to continue on your journey with water? I mean, how dumb are you??

I want to finish this morning with a catalog of all of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to us during our beginning salvation experience. All of the ministries of the Holy Spirit that begin our salvation.

I'll begin with the drawing of us to salvation. We read it earlier when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus. *14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.* John 3:14,15

Then in John chapter 12 Jesus will say this; *31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."*

Then in John chapter 16 notice that the "Myself" in the previous verse is shifted to the Holy Spirit. One God in 3 persons. Jesus says the Holy Spirit is the one who draws men to salvation by convincing them of their sin;

7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

The Spirit draws us to Jesus. The Spirit convicts us of our sin. For those of us who are the called, repentance from sin follows conviction. That also comes from God, not us. It is the Spirit that brings our repentance.

Acts 11:18 illustrates this. Peter had gone and preached to gentiles at the house of Cornelius and the Holy Spirit saved the first gentiles into the church. Later, Peter recounts to the jews what happened. And silenced by God the jews admit; *18 And when they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has **granted** to the Gentiles also the **repentance** that leads to life."* Acts 11:18

The Spirit draws us, the Spirit convicts us of sin, the Spirit grants us repentance, and the Spirit actually supplies the saving faith. *8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8,9

The Spirit supplies the grace and the Spirit gives us the gift of the very faith that saves us. All of it, all of the mechanics of calling dead people to life, calling enslaved sinners out of this world to glorious freedom from the penalty and the power of sin, all happens when the Spirit quickens those who are the called out ones, from death to life.

4 But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ Eph. 2:4,5a

Knowing all of these great doctrines of grace that are caused by the Holy Spirit makes Paul's argument very convincing. Having begun by the Spirit are you going to continue in the flesh?

We wouldn't be having this conversation if the Spirit hadn't called us, convicted us, granted us repentance, quickened us to life, supplied us with the very gift of faith itself, and called us out of Satan's kingdom into God's kingdom.

So the next logical step is to abandon the Spirit and keep Moses law in the flesh. Utter insanity. You are fools to have fallen into that trap.

Next week we'll finish these first 5 verses by continuing our catalog of all that the Holy Spirit accomplishes for us, with us, in us. After salvation, there's more! And it doesn't happen by wasting time in Moses law working in our flesh. ***That*** is foolishness.

Are you charmed? Are you on some dead end road, following pied pipers going nowhere?

I can't overstate the importance of the second best selling christian book ever written. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory of two men travelling in this world, on their way to the celestial kingdom, and over and over and over they are charmed into bogs and castles with the giant despair, and mud bogs that slow them and worldly city that gets angry with them and kills one of them, until finally after all of the pitfalls and false charms, they get to the river with the celestial kingdom just beyond.

It's a masterpiece of literature and Bunyan catalogs all of the pitfalls and charms that can beset us on our journey. Find the annotated version with notes by Warren Wiersbe. Or borrow my copy.