

GALATIANS

3:1-14 | STUDY GUIDE

The Curse

GALATIANS 3:1, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified." (ESV)

- Paul is harsh
 - To bewitch is to literally to trick or "lead others away through error"
 - Magic and dark arts were prevalent in Galatia at this time
- Dating back hundreds of years B.C., the Celts were known to practice even human sacrifice
 - Voodoo, potions, and spells were quite common
- The "evil eye" was a spell that terrified the ancient Greeks

GALATIANS 3:2-3, "Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (ESV)

- Paul points out the stupidity of their attempt to perfect themselves through works
 - Paul uses plain language
- He warns against letting ourselves be deceived by what "sounds good"
 - "I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments." (Colossians 2:4, NIV)

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GALATIANS 3:6, "...just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? (ESV)

- Paul here is quoting Genesis 15:6
 - Even the father of our faith wasn't righteous because of his works
 - God credited his faith as righteousness
 - Significantly this happens before he is circumcised

GALATIANS 3:7, "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." (ESV)

- It's not a genetic link that is most important, but rather faith
 - This was always God's plan
 - "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." (3:8)
 - This passage has mistakenly given rise to "replacement theology," arguing that God replaced the Israelites with the Gentiles—that He's finished with Israel.
 - This is an absolute misappropriation of Scripture
 - There are "sons of Abraham" both genetically and spiritually

GALATIANS 3:10, "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.'" (ESV)

- Deuteronomy 27:26
 - The more a person attempts to be perfect, the more evident it is that such is impossible

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GALATIANS 3:13, "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"—" (ESV)

- Quoting Deuteronomy 21:23
 - A penalty worse than death: shame and humiliation of being publicly exposed upon death
 - The Jews did not practice crucifixion
 - Criminals would sometimes be hung on wooden posts, but only after execution and never left overnight
- Paul was emphatically telling the church that the debt was paid, as foretold by Scripture

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: N.T. Wright, *The New Testament In its World*, Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, *Archaeological Study Bible*