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O Foolish Galatians, Who has Cast a Spell on You 3: 1-5

O Foolish Galatians, who has cast a spell on you DIG: How does Paul's appeal here validate what he argued in 2:15-16? How does Paul's appeal to their suffering in verse 4, their experience in verses 2-5, and Messiah's death in 2:21 expose the foolishness and futility of human effort? What is the role of the Ruach ha-Kodesh in salvation and a believers' testimony before the world?

REFLECT: The Ruach ha-Kodesh is the only real evidence of conversion in a person. How have you seen the Ruach at work in someone's life? When was the last time you were convicted by the Ruach ha-Kodesh? What "rules" seem to be important in your circle of friends who are believers? Why do you think that is? How similar or dissimilar are these rules to the Oral Law (see the commentary on The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law)? Why do you think that is? Have you endorsed your check?

When Paul first came to Galatia, they readily believed in his salvation equals faith-plus-nothing gospel. But after having received new life in Yeshua by faith, they had been persuaded to live out their new lives by the old way of deeds. Therefore, Paul asked six different rhetorical questions to prove ADONAI saves sinners through faith in Messiah and not by the deeds of the Torah.

Few things are more tragic or disappointing than a believer who deserts the **gospel of grace** for the counterfeit gospel that tries to improve on the finished work of **Messiah**. However, in **Paul's** absence from **Galatia**, many of the believers there had fallen under the influence of **the Judaizers (to see link click [Ag - Who Were the Judaizers?](#))**.

Throughout church history some believers have begun well but later pulled away from the truths they first believed and followed. They were saved by the **faith-plus-**

nothing **gospel** and lived for **ADONAI** in humble trust, but then fell prey to some system of legalism and works righteousness that promised more but produced much less. Some fall into legalism, substituting external ceremonies and rites, for the internal reality of a personal relationship with **Yeshua Messiah**. Others fall in legalistic systems of do's and don'ts, hoping to improve their standing before **YHVH** by doing or not doing certain things. Still others look for a "second blessing" – a spiritual secret to unlock some higher plane of spirituality, an additional experience of **grace** – once again hoping to receive more of **the Lord** than they imagine was granted to them at conversion (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**).

Paul had been used by **Ha'Shem** to introduce the **gospel** of salvation equals **faith-plus-nothing** to **the Galatians**. But now they were drifting away from pure **grace** and had accepted a counterfeit substitute based on **the 613 commandments of the Torah**. The defecting believers had not lost their salvation (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**), but they had lost the joy and freedom of it and had returned to the slavery of self-imposed legalism. They were still in **Messiah** and had a right standing with **ADONAI**, but were not living in conformity with the truth that had saved them to begin with. Because they had allowed themselves to be deceived, they also stumbled the unbelievers around them to think that being a child of **God** was a matter of following the 613 commandments of **the Torah** rather than simple **faith/trust/belief** in **Yeshua**.

The Adversary never stops in his efforts to destroy **the Lord's** way of salvation, and because **ADONAI's** way is by **His grace** working through our **faith**, the devil's response is the opposite, the way of mankind's own effort and good deeds. From the time of **Cain's** first works-righteous offering of a grain instead of an animal sacrifice (see the commentary on **Genesis Bj - Your Brother's Blood Cries Out to Me from the Ground**), unbelieving man has sought to make himself right with **God** through his own goodness and merit.

When **Paul** first came to **Galatia** on **his** first missionary journey (see the commentary on **Acts Bm - Paul's First Missionary Journey**), **he** was amazed at **his** gracious reception. **He** was physically hurting, yet **though my physical condition was a trial to you, you did not hate or reject me. No, you welcomed me as a messenger of God - or even as Messiah**

Yeshua (4:14). But now **he** was at a loss to explain **their** defection from **the**

gospel of faith-plus-nothing that **he** had preached to **them**, saying: **I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from the simple gospel of faith in Messiah, the One who called you by grace, to a different gospel; not that there is another, but only some are confusing you and want to distort the Good News of Messiah (1:6-7).** Having received new life in **Yeshua** by **faith**, **they** had been persuaded to live out **their** new lives by the old way of **deeds**. **They** had turned back from **grace** to the obedience of **the 613 commandments of Moshe**, from **trust** to **deeds**, from the cross to ceremony, from freedom to slavery.

Here, **Paul** reminds **his** readers that a believer's experience of **the Lord Jesus Christ, the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, and of **God the Father** are unquestionable evidence of having a right standing before **YHVH** through personal **faith** in the perfect, completed work of **Messiah**, apart from any human effort. Although experience in itself is not entirely reliable evidence of spiritual reality, it is nevertheless a powerful defense of the **gospel** when closely linked with and built on scriptural truth. Because genuine experience of a believer verifies the **gospel of grace**, **the** inspired **apostle** was led by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** to use it as an effective means of defending the doctrine of **justification by faith**.⁶⁵

Paul uses **six different rhetorical questions** here, each giving an obvious answer, to prove **ADONAI** saves sinners through **faith in Messiah** and not by **the deeds of the Torah**.

O foolish Galatians (3:1a)! This is an expression of surprise mingled with indignation. **Paul** was incredulous, hardly able to believe what **the Galatians** had done. Like many other believers before and after them, they had been deceived by the Adversary. However, **the Galatian believers** were especially **foolish** because **they** were privileged to sit under the teaching of the apostle **Paul himself**, whose heartbeat was the **gospel of grace**. The Greek word for **foolish** is *anoetos*. It does not express mental deficiency, but mental laziness and carelessness. *Anoetos* frequently carried the idea of wrong attitude of heart and a lack of **faith** that clouds judgment. **The believers in Galatia** were not stupid; **they** had simply failed to use **their** spiritual intelligence when faced with the unscriptural, **gospel-destroying** teaching of the **Judaizers**. **They** were simply not using **their** heads.

First, Who has cast a spell on you (3:1b)? The phrase **cast a spell** is from the Greek word *baskaino*, which means to charm or fascinate in a misleading way, as by flattery, false promises, or occultic power, and clearly suggests the use of feeling

over fact, emotion over clear understanding of truth. “**Who** flattered you so much?” **Paul** asked rhetorically, fully aware of the answer. Although the word *baskaino* can carry the idea of sorcery, but that isn’t the idea here. **The Galatians** were not victims of a magical spell or incarnation, but were misled by teachings that they should have instantly recognized as false. **They** were willing victims who surrendered to the counterfeit doctrine of **the Judaizers**.⁶⁶

Before your very eyes Yeshua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as crucified (3:1c). **Clearly portrayed** translates *progropho*, a word that was used of posting important official notices on a placard in the marketplace or other public location for citizens to read. **Yeshua Messiah** had been **clearly portrayed** before **the Galatians** by **Paul himself**. Those who sat at **his** feet could almost hear the ringing of the hammer as it drove the nails into **Yeshua’s** hands and feet. **They** may have been able to visualize the blood flowing from **His** thorn-pierced head and spear-pierced side. **They** were convinced of **His** atoning death, convicted of **their** sin, and brought into the Kingdom of heaven by **their faith**.

The word **crucified** is in the perfect tense, indicating that **the crucifixion** was a historical fact that had continuing results. As **John** declares: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9)**. No ritual, ceremony, regulation, or anything else devised or accomplished by mankind can add to the **Messiah’s** atoning sacrifice on the cross. **Those Galatians** who put **their** trust in **the Torah of Moshe** for salvation obligated **themselves** to keep all 613 commandments, which is humanly impossible. **They** were so **foolish**.

Second, I want to find out just one thing from you: did you receive the Ruach by deeds based on Torah, or by hearing based on trust (3:2)? **Paul’s** repeated return to **the deeds of the Torah** indicates the wide-spread conviction of the culture that **Yeshua** was born into, that **Torah**-study and obedience had in fact represented the keys of knowledge which would open up **God’s** Kingdom. It is only now that people can know **ADONAI** through **Yeshua’s faithfulness** and obedience on the cross, ushering in a B’rit Chadashah written on **the heart** of flesh, that the shortcomings of **Torah**-study for salvation have become apparent.⁶⁷

Here, **Paul** considers **the deeds based on Torah** as advocated by **the Judaizers** as being comparable to perfection via **the flesh**, namely circumcision, coupled with bad motives. **The apostle** was not discounting the value of **God’s Torah**, but was focusing **his** readers’ attention on its misuse by **the Judaizers**. As an essentially

Gentile church, they did not possess **the Torah** anyway.

Like **the Judaizers** of today, the Hebrew Roots movement (see [Ak - The Hebrew Roots Movement: A Different Gospel](#)) wants to add special requirements that supposedly add blessings to the finished and perfect work of **Messiah** – such as wanting to *add* the impossible burden of following the 613 commandments to **faith in Christ**, as if **His** shed blood isn't enough to save us! **Galatians 1:6-10** sums up what **Paul** said about adding **Torah** observance for salvation. **The Judaizers** of today appear to be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua**, **Paul** declared. **For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what was impossible for the Torah - since it was weakened on account of the flesh - God has already done (Romans 8:1-4).**

Third, are you so foolish? The Galatians' foolishness in **Paul's** eye was that **they** were seeking to *add* something that was already completed by **Yeshua** on the cross. The same way we came into the relationship with **Messiah**, is the way we live it out.

Fourth, after beginning with the Ruach, will you now reach the goal in the flesh (3:3)? It was as if **Paul** was saying, "How could you think that your weak, imperfect, still sinful flesh could improve on what **the Spirit of God** began in you when you first believed? Righteousness always having been a matter of **circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:29)**, why wonders **Paul**, did **the Galatians** need the physical sign of **circumcision**? Having begun with a spiritual transformation, were **they** then looking for justification through a physical transformation . . . and becoming Jewish? A misconception that **the Galatians** had was that **they** were justified by **faith**, but sanctified by works. But that is **a different gospel (1:6)**.

Over a hundred years ago a book of B. B. Warfield's collected writing called *Perfectionism* was published. There were certain men at that time who were claiming that they had reached a state of perfectionism in this life. And in his writings Warfield disputed that concept, claiming sanctification in this life was only a goal, not a reality. However, it probably would have been easier, just to ask the wives of those men a few questions.

Fifth, did you endure so much for nothing? When **they** first became believers **they** had to separate **themselves** from paganism and repudiate the worship of

foreign gods. This resulted in great persecution from **the other Galatians and the new believers** suffered much. But now, since **they** were listening to **the Judaizers** and submitting **themselves** to the 613 commandments of Moshe, in essence, **they** were really saying that **they** had suffered **for nothing**. **They** were being told **they really** were not yet saved because **they** had not been circumcised. Was all **their** suffering **for nothing**? **Paul** softens the blow by adding: **If it really was for nothing**, leaving open the possibility and hope that it was not and **they** would come to **their** senses and reject the false gospel of **the Judaizers (3:4)**.

Sixth, the Galatian believers received **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** by **faith in Messiah**, not through obedience to **the Torah**. The gift of **the Spirit of God** is the believer's greatest evidence of **ADONAI's** favor, **His** greatest proof of salvation and the down payment of eternal glory. **So then, Paul** asked: **The One who gives you the saving Ruach and works miracles among you - does He do it because of your deeds based on Torah or your hearing based on trust and faithfulness (3:5)?** They had seen **Paul** perform **miracles** in **Iconium (Acts 14:3)**, and **Lystra (Acts 14:8-11)**. It was clear, furthermore, that those supernatural **miracles** were not the result of **deeds of the Torah**, but from hearing that leads to **faith**. **The Galatians** did not know **the Torah** anyway, and **Paul's gospel** was salvation equals **faith-plus-nothing**.

Today, the fact that you are reading this probably means that you are saved . . . and that is a **miracle**. There are people who have had their life changed. There are alcoholics and drug addicts who have been redeemed. There are people who were living an immoral life that have turned around and are walking in a different direction. There are people whose home was breaking up that have been given a new love and a new relationship. So **Paul** is saying when these **miracles** happened in your life, did that happen because of your **deeds** or because of **His grace**?

But for most in this world, it seems too simple to be saved by **grace** alone, through **faith** alone, in **Messiah** alone. So here in **Galatians**, **Paul** will declare **his gospel** of **grace** over and over and over again. It is not what we do, it is what **He** does. They think to themselves, "Surely there must be SOMETHING I have to do to have a right standing before **ADONAI!**" The Philippian jailer said: **What must I do to be saved?** And **Paul's** answer was: **Put your trust in the Lord Yeshua and you will be saved (Acts 16:30-31)**.

What does putting your **faith/trust/belief** (Greek: *pisteuo* from *pistis*) in **Messiah** mean? If someone gave you a check for a million dollars as a gift and you go to the



bank and speak to the teller and say, “Wow! Can you believe someone gave me this check for a million dollars!” She would say, “I’ve never seen anything like that. How wonderful for you.” Then the teller would say, “But you have to endorse it.” And after you endorse that check, you leave the bank and start telling people that you had *earned* that money just because you signed your name to it. Would anyone believe you? No! There is no way that anyone would believe that endorsing a check would mean that you worked for the million dollars.

Over two thousand years ago, **God** wrote a check and made it out to you for eternal life. And **He** wrote it in the name of **Yeshua Messiah**. And the way we endorse that check, the way we receive that gift is our **faith/trust/belief** in **Yeshua Messiah**, **His** crucifixion on Calvary and resurrection. It is **believing that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (First Corinthians 15:3b-4)**. It is nothing we *do*; but merely receiving the free gift of salvation that **He** has offered, in the same way that someone endorses a check.

Have you endorsed your check? If so, see my commentary on **[The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith.](#)**