

# *It Is Written*

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## *Have You Been Bewitched?—Galatians 3:1-5*

By Thomas Thornhill

In these verses, Paul calls the Galatians "foolish" and "bewitched" for being deceived by Judaizing false teachers. He doesn't believe in such superstition but uses it as sarcasm to make them think. How did they receive the Spirit that brought justification and salvation?

Paul is deeply distressed that the Galatians were so foolishly listening to false teachers who were turning them away from the pure gospel of Christ which had delivered them from paganism and corrupt Judaism back to the law of Moses and the traditions of men (Matthew 15:7-9), which could not save them. So Paul sarcastically seems to say that the only explanation he can see for them acting so foolishly is that they must have been bewitched (put under a spell, hexed) since having seen Jesus Christ openly portrayed as being crucified before them had made such a little impression Galatians 3:1. He proceeds with a question about how they had learned this, by the works of law or by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2). Instead of making progress, they are going backward, from the Spirit to the flesh, rather than from the flesh to the Spirit (Galatians 3:3). Was their suffering, after yielding to the gospel and receiving the benefits of it, now in vain? That is, has it become a wasted effort because it was an imaginary good (Galatians 3:4)? They had seen Paul perform miracles before them and impart gifts to some. Was this by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:5)?

Today, we have the same type of influences affecting the world. The power and appeal of the gospel have been lost to many. They have, in Paul's words, been "bewitched," thus the lesson for today.

Many religious people are "foolish" and "bewitched" by false teachers. "Foolish" according to the words of Jesus (Matthew 7:26). Bewitched is a superstitious term of witchcraft (voodooism today) denoting one who has been hexed or had a spell cast on him by a witch deriving power from the devil. I'm using it to denote people who are deceived by false teachers. False teachers have always abounded (Matthew 7:15-16; II Peter 2:1-3; I John 4:1). They are not easily recognized (II Corinthians 11:13-15; 4:3-4; II Thessalonians 2:9-12).

How are people "bewitched"? One is saved "by faith in the Son of God." He had been openly crucified before them (Galatians 3:1), not literally but through the gospel (I Corinthians 2:1-2; 15:3-4). Hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9), which comes by the word of God which saves (Romans 10:17; Acts 11:14). Receiving the Spirit is not the Spirit Himself but the word He reveals. The word is the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:12-13), which develops faith (John 20:30-31). It is the mind of God put into words for us (I Corinthians 2:10-13). We know the difference between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error by what is preached (I John 4:1,6). If it cannot be found in God's word, those who follow the words of men are "bewitched." They have made void the word of God (Mark 7:6-9). The power to save comes only through the gospel (Romans 1:16). If you will not obey it then you are under the power of the devil.

## Reasoning Includes God

By Doy Moyer

Reason has been granted to us by God as those made in His image. When we try to reason without acknowledging God, we become our own idols by assuming that we do not need God. This leads to futility in thinking (Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:17). In doing this we are relying on our own

wisdom and we will not understand God and His purposes, since the world through its wisdom cannot know God (I Corinthians 1:21).

Reason and logic are an undeniable part of who we are. Try making an argument for denying logic and you will come across as senseless and self-defeating, for you will be appealing to reason even as you deny it. By using our reason appropriately, however, we are glorifying the God who gave us our minds and set in order the way facts, reason, and faith function together. We ought to learn to do it well because it is the Lord whom we serve and we are to love Him “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

I have seen criticisms of logic as applied to Bible study. This is often in conjunction with arguing that we ought not to try to interpret the Bible; we just read it and do it with no interpretation at all. This sounds noble, but it is naive, erroneous, and dangerous because it unwittingly makes a person’s own perceptions into another idol. “This is what the Bible says” can become code for, “This is what I think it means and I cannot be wrong.” And doing this will inevitably lead us into contradiction.

While there are places where “that’s what it says” is appropriate, making blanket statements like that without first doing the contextual homework can lead to misapplications of God’s word and lend support to false doctrine. We shouldn’t just say, “That’s what it says” without first making sure that’s what it really says in its context. After all, the devil was crafty at using Scripture to test Jesus. He quoted Scripture. It’s “what it said,” but his application was malicious (Matthew 4:5-6). Let us be diligent and careful to avoid that devilish pitfall. Do the homework. Reason well. Apply appropriately.

“Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

## Sin Versus Grace

By Doy Moyer

Sin is much more than just the commission of a bad act here or there. It is a condition in which we reside. Sin is something in which people walk and live (Colossians 3:7). We were dead in sin and were by nature “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:1-3). Sin holds us captive as slaves (Romans 6). This is one reason why we cannot simply decide to beat sin and save ourselves. We cannot do it. Thinking we can take care of it ourselves is like thinking a drowning man can save himself simply by treading water longer with no one else in sight. It may work for a few minutes, but that can hardly be thought of as being saved, and the man will still fail to stay above water.

The solution to sin, then, must come from One who is entirely holy. And this solution is as immersive as the disease it is intended to cure. This is the grace of God, which is not just something applied here or there (as though sin were only committed here or there). Grace is something in which we stand (Romans 5:2). Though sin reigned in death, grace reigns through righteousness, and grace is far greater than sin (Romans 5-6). This does not mean we continue in sin as if we remain enslaved to it. May it never be! Rather we are told to “present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:13-14).

As enveloping as sin is, grace is greater and more immersive. We need to see sin for what it is, but we also need to see God’s grace and the transforming power of the Spirit. If we cannot do this, then sin will keep us entangled in its grasp and bury us in its eternal consequences. Far greater, though, is the destiny of God’s people to whom belong the promise of eternal life.