

## Study: Galatians 3:1-14, Tough Love

*Leader's Note: Meaning is not only conveyed by what we say, but also by how we say it. This week we are going to explore Paul's heart as he pleads with the Galatians to cling to Christ. We are going to not merely think about the propositional truth contained in this passage, but also feel the passion that Paul has for who we are in Christ and see how that motivates him to risk his relationship with the Galatian Christians.*

*As we look at both the truths and the passion that Paul puts forth, we want to be challenged to understand what love looks like from a Biblical perspective. So, hold onto your seat, this is going to be a fun ride!*

**Pray for your time together in God's Word.**

*Leader's Note: If you need an icebreaker question, here is one:*

- How many songs can you name with the word fool in them?

### **I - Love and Foolishness (or What's Love Got to Do with it?)**

<sup>1</sup> O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup> 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—<sup>6</sup> just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

<sup>7</sup> Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> 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.” <sup>9</sup> So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:1-9, ESV)

#### Key Terms:

##### **Bewitched**

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that can be translated “bewitched.” One is used in Acts 8:9 and it refers to the work of Simon Magus. It means “to be out of one's mind,” “to astonish,” “to overwhelm with wonder.” The other word (used in Galatians 3:1) means “to fascinate by false representation.”

**Law / Works of the Law**

In the New Testament, the term “law” is used to refer to the code that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai and, at times, to the entire Pentateuch (The first five books of the Bible.) Paul uses the term “Works of the Law” to refer to the actions that individuals undertake to try and live up to the law.

**Spirit**

The word Spirit in this passage refers to the Holy Spirit. While it may be easy to think of spirit as a ghost, a soul, or ethos, here it specifically refers to the third person of the Trinity.

**Gentile**

In the Old Testament the world was divided between the people of God (Jews) and everyone else (Gentiles). The New Testament uses these terms to help show the magnitude of the work of reconciliation that Jesus did by abolishing this divide.

**Questions for Discussion:**

**Ask the Group:** Look back over the first nine verses of Galatians 3, paying close attention to the tone that Paul uses. How does Paul display tough love toward these believers in these verses?

*Possible Answers: He’s pointing out that they’re being swayed by persuasive words by calling them foolish and suggesting that they are bewitched, emphasizing their change of direction (from grace to law), and reminding them of the miracles that were worked in their midst.*

**Ask the Group:** There are times that we might use a similar tone when giving correction or might need to receive correction from others using a similar tone. Take a moment to think back on your experiences and describe a time either when you displayed tough love toward another person or when you were the recipient of tough love. (Bonus points for using the terms “mom” or “dad” in your answer.)

*Leaders Note: Answers will vary depending on experiences. The point of this question is to personalize the actions of Paul and help your group see love in a new light - not to fix unhealthy past experiences of group members.*

**Ask the Group:** The tough love that Paul displays in this passage looks very similar to selfishness. How do the words of this passage help us to understand that this is motivated out of love and not self?

*Possible Answers: If this were selfishness Paul may have said things like “After all I have done for you, how could you abandon me!” making this about him and not about their relationship with God. He would not be constantly pointing them back to Christ and the work that the Spirit has done for them.*

- If it were motivated out of self, how might the words change with the tone staying the same?

**Ask the Group:** Take a moment to look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (included below.) How are these two passages similar and how are they different when looked at through the lens of love?

*Leaders Note: While the TONE of these two passages is different, the aim is the same. On the surface we may be tempted to see Paul as impatient with the Galatian Christians, but if we look at what he is saying, he is displaying patience with them by addressing the issue and not abandoning them. Both passages deal with truth. As has already been pointed out, Paul is not boastful in that he does not make this about him but about their relationship with God.*

- How can our understanding of love be enhanced by looking at them together?

*<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8, ESV)*

## **II - The Righteous Shall Live by Faith (or You Gotta Have Faith (faith, faith))**

*<sup>10</sup> 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.” <sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” <sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” <sup>13</sup> 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”—<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14, ESV)*

### Key Terms:

#### **Justified**

To be justified means found to be made right. It is to be brought in line with what is right and good (Think about choosing alignment in a document that you are typing. If you left justify the text, it all lines up on the left.). If we are justified, we are made to line up (legally) with God’s demands.

#### **Righteous**

The idea of being righteous or righteousness is closely tied to the idea of being justified. To be justified is to be made right or put in a state of righteousness. Righteousness is the result of being justified. It is a right standing with God.

#### **Cursed**

When something or someone is cursed, it is doomed to destruction. It will not amount to good but will suffer evil. Something could be cursed in a temporal sense but the implications in this passage are eternal (damned to hell and separated from God).

*Questions for Discussion:*

**Ask the Group:** How can you live out of faith in Jesus and not attempt to try and earn God's favor through your actions?

*Leaders Note: While individual actions may differ and this question is designed explore those actions, the basis of all those actions is to recognize what Jesus has done and trust (have faith) in Him.*

**Ask the Group:** In what ways do verses 10-14 ground (provide a basis for) the tough love that Paul shows in verses one through nine?

*Possible Answers: It is propositional truth and talks about the basis for the relationship with Christ and the work He did on the cross. Specific examples include our inability to keep the law (vs. 10), the redemption we have in Christ (vs. 13), and the promise of the Spirit (vs. 14.)*

**Ask the Group:** How do the words "all," "everyone," and "no one" inform Paul's sense of urgency?

*Possible Answers: All are included. No one is able to stand on his own merit. There is none that are righteous.*

**Wrap Up**

**Ask the Group:** How can you allow the truth of what Jesus has done for you to inform and empower your love for others?

- In what ways can you allow it to embolden you to risk temporal relationships in pursuit of eternal ones?

*Leader's Note: Answers to these questions will depend on the individual experiences and situations of group members.*

**Ask the Group:** What is our community application of this passage?

*Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.*