

## OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › Ask students if they've ever seen a TV show where one of the characters had been hypnotized. Lead a discussion about the silly things the hypnotist tells the hypnotized person to do (i.e., quack like a duck, bark like a dog, laugh or cry). Explain how when someone is hypnotized, they often believe things that aren't true, like they're a dog or a duck. Paul told the Christians in Galatia that they had been hypnotized by a false gospel, and were believing things that simply weren't true—namely, they were relying on the law to justify them and not faith in Christ. We do this even today. It is tempting sometimes to rely on our own good works to save us instead of the already finished work of Christ.

## CONTEXT

- › In chapter 3, Paul continues to beat the drum for justification by faith over and against those who claim you can become right with God by “works of the law.” In today's language, we might think of these “works of the law” as adherence to religious practices. In Christian circles, this might include church attendance, having a quiet time, tithing, and so on. These are all good practices, of course, but they are not what makes you a Christian. Only faith in Jesus' sacrificial death for sin can make a person right with God. Paul effectively builds his case through careful argument and example. Again, his tone is very firm—he can't believe the Galatians would fall back into legalism (the practice of trying to earn God's approval). It's anti-gospel and it makes Christians miserable.

## EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

The following are suggested sermon points for each verse or section of verses for a large group setting.

- › Galatians 3:1. *God has communicated the gospel loud and clear, and yet we can still miss it.* Paul makes the point that Jesus was publicly crucified. Our faith is based on events that occurred in real history. Our faith is based on what He did, not on what we do. When we miss the significance of the cross, we miss everything.
- › Galatians 3:2-5. *The Christian life begins with faith and continues by faith.* We become Christians by hearing the gospel message and believing it. We grow as the Spirit of God continues to apply the gospel—the grace of God—to our hearts. We don't start with a rocket booster of faith and then continue with the fuel of our own religious efforts.
- › Galatians 3:6-9. *Abraham is credited with righteousness because he believed what God told him.* In the example of Abraham, we see justification by faith in the Old Testament in embryonic form. It isn't fully developed yet because Christ had not yet come. Nevertheless, the principle was there. Abraham was credited with righteousness before he was circumcised. In other words, before he had obeyed the law.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each verse or section of verses for leading a small group session are also useful in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:1.

- › **Do you find it surprising that Paul would call the Galatians “foolish”? Does that seem a little insensitive in our day and age? Why do you think he thought it was necessary to take that approach?**
- › **Why does Paul mention that they were witnesses to Christ's crucifixion? How does this strengthen his argument against them?**

### ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:2-5.

- › **How did the Galatians receive the Spirit? Why is that important?**
- › **Why does Paul ask the Galatians if they're trying to make themselves complete by the flesh? What does that mean? Are there any ways you are tempted to make yourself complete (or perfect) by the flesh?**





- › **What is the connection between hearing and faith? Where does faith come from? How do we grow in faith?**

#### **ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:6-9.**

- › **What did Abraham believe God about? What does it mean that those who have faith are Abraham's sons? In what sense are they his sons?**
- › **Does the prophetic nature of the Scriptures give you confidence that the Bible is true?**
- › **How was Abraham blessed? What are some ways all Christians are blessed?**

## **SESSION CONNECTION**

- › In Session 5, we return to the Book of Joshua. At this point of the story, Israel has conquered her enemies and is settling into the land. Having witnessed God miraculously fight for them, life was returning to normal for God's people, or at least a new and better normal. During this time, Joshua challenged the various tribes of Israel to persevere, and to continue loving and serving God. They couldn't afford to become complacent. Similarly, the Galatians needed to remain faithful to the original good news of the gospel that they had received and that had transformed their lives. Some in the Galatian churches had drifted from the simplicity and purity of the gospel. It can happen to the best of us. We need to keep hearing the gospel with faith or we may fall into legalism, too.

## **OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION**

- › Play the game Two Truths and a Lie with your students. (Two Truths and a Lie is a game in which one attempts to identify which of the three statements is a lie. Instruct everyone to sit in a circle. Each person prepares three statements, two of which are true and one of which is a lie.) After everyone has had a turn, explain how, sometimes, it's hard to decipher God's truth from Satan's lies. The Galatian Christians were having a hard time doing this very thing — distinguishing the gospel from the false gospel. The tricky part was, the false gospel, at first glance, didn't seem too different from the gospel. As Charles Spurgeon, a British preacher in the 1800s, once said, "Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right." Of course, "almost right" is still wrong, but it is harder to discern. Explain how time in God's Word is the best safeguard we have against believing a "false gospel."

Following Christ requires us to press on in life, loving and serving Him with all that we are, regardless of the circumstances.

- › <https://bible.org/article/what-gospel>– J. Hampton Keathley III drives home what the gospel is and isn't, how the word 'gospel' is used in Scripture, and how we might identify false gospels.
- › <http://thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/detail/gospel-clarity/>– In his sermon, Gospel Clarity, Matt Chandler cuts through many common misconceptions about the gospel to get to the heart of the good news about Jesus.

\* These websites are not affiliated with LifeWay. Consult with your church's leadership before including these in your session to be sure that your church's values allow their materials to be referenced in your session time.