

4. Have you been bewitched?

Galations 3:1-14

“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”
(NIV Jn 6:29)

“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean”.) (NIV Mk 7:18–19)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”
(NIV Mt 5:17)

Theological principles - making sense

1. Isn't circumcision the most important covenant marker, the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

2. Abraham had faith, but was still required to circumcise his offspring. So doesn't that mean that circumcision and the other rituals of the law still matter?

Answer: No, that is to misunderstand the law. (3:15-29)

3. So the law has no relevance to Christians then? We can just do what we like?

Answer: The law guarantees our freedom as heirs of the promise. (4:1-31.)

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

Paul refers to

- gospel experience (vv1-5)

- the experience of Abraham (vv6-14)

But these are in essence the same (v6, v8, v14)!

We will examine these two arguments, then look at some applications for ourselves.

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

Paul refers to gospel experience (vv1-5)

What was it that changed your lives?

Jews were circumcised, but it was not enough.

Gentiles received not Jewish rules, but Christ crucified (v1).

The Spirit came through belief (v3) and belief was the root of their Christian experience (v4).

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

Paul refers to Abraham's experience (vv6-14)

What was it that changed Abraham's life?

Circumcision comes from Genesis 17:10-14, but the gospel was preached to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "In him all nations would be blessed".

Abraham was *counted righteous on the basis of his faith*, Genesis 15:6, years before the command of circumcision.

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

By contrast the law declares us unrighteous.

It only takes one crime to make a criminal (v12).

Of itself, the law has no effectiveness to save.

“The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. (NIV Isaiah 1:11–13)

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

Through faith, God declares us righteous.
By contrast the law declares us unrighteous.
So how can God do that?

On the basis of the crucified Jesus, who kept the law perfectly and was therefore able to take on our curse (v13)!

Is circumcision the sign of God's favour?

Answer : No, that is faith. (3:1-14)

Three applications for ourselves:

1. Faith and reason are not in opposition (vv1-14, 1 Peter 3:15)
2. Faith requires no add-ons for salvation (v5)
3. Faith is the life force of a living church (vv1-6)

A threefold chord which is not easily broken
(Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Grace alone, scripture alone, faith alone