

**Introduction:**

- A. A few months ago I was with a bunch of pastors in northern Wisconsin. They all talked about the influence of a fast-growing Jewish-like Christian cult in their area often called the Hebrew Roots Movement. According to one critic,

*Broadly speaking, followers of the HRM believe that all believers in Christ are obligated to follow Jewish laws and practices from the books of Moses. ... Although they often speak of keeping the “law,” they are usually inconsistent in how this is understood and defined. For example, certain laws are either broken or neglected while a great deal of attention is placed on keeping the Sabbath and celebrating the feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23.* [\[Source\]](#)

I was astonished to hear of the huge influence this movement is having in their area and all over the country!

I read through a long statement of beliefs on one of their HRM websites and found myself wondering what the problem was. It all seemed pretty orthodox to me. Then I came to this one:

*We believe Yeshua is to be our example on how to walk the Word, as opposed to using Yeshua as an excuse for declaring some of the Word is destroyed or made void.*

Do you see the problem? That means that we must all do whatever Jewish practices Jesus followed as an observant Jew if we want to walk as Jesus did.

- B. Do you know what Paul would say to that? I'll tell you what he'd say: **“You fools! ‘Did someone put a hex on you? You’ve taken leave of your senses!’ Look at the cross!”** [The Message] You can read it for yourself. Turn to **Gal. 3.**

- C. The Galatian churches, which were made up primarily of Gentiles, were being pressured by Jewish Christians we call Judaizers to become Jews via circumcision. Paul just about came out of his skin when he got word of that because they were our salvation through Christ is completely free, but they were saying, “*Well, yes, it is certainly free ... to those who are circumcised.*” *Illus.:* Did you ever see some commercial offering a wonderful product, like this “FREE Rolex Submariner \$5,000 Value.” Then in the small print you see, “(Just Pay Shipping & Handling.)” Right. I bet that’s a great deal. A knock-off watch for ... well, I couldn’t even *find* the S&H price! That’s what the Judaizers were doing to the gospel. “*It’s FREE! Plus keeping some minor essentials of God’s Law.*”
- D. The issue with those Judaizers and that Hebrew Roots Movement, with cults like Jehovah’s Witnesses and Latter Day Saints, and sometimes other churches, is not that they take things away from the gospel, but that they try to add something to it. It is *the Gospel and* ... The Gospel is what saves us, the Judaizers would agree, but it is *the Gospel and circumcision to be included in God’s covenant.* *Illus.:* In Susan’s family they had a rule regarding prayers before meals so they wouldn’t get so long: *No ands*... I thought of that here: ***The gospel with no ands.***
- E. That’s what brings us to **3:1**, “*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*” Paul means, *When we preached the gospel to you we put what Jesus accomplished on the cross on a huge billboard. Not just that he was crucified but what it meant. You understood it and believed it. So who cast a spell on you people? Who has been messing with your heads??*

- F. This whole business is in the Bible because it is a question that you and I may also face. Just like all those believers who are falling for that Hebrew Roots Movement. Here's his point: **never lose sight of what Christ's crucifixion means to us.** Paul gives two reasons why believing in Christ crucified is enough; no *ands*.

3:2-5...

I. **WE KNOW THAT BELIEVING "CHRIST CRUCIFIED" IS ENOUGH BECAUSE WHEN WE BELIEVED WE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- A. I suspect that the Galatian believers had a similar experience to one described in **Acts 10:44-47** when Gentiles first learned of the gospel through Peter ...

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."*

I imagine Paul's question to the Galatian believers here is to say, "Did you think you were missing something then??"

- B. **V.3**, "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?" It's like asking Superman, "Now that you know what it's like to be so strong, why would you return to being a crime fighter as Clark Kent?" If trusting Christ brought you the wonderful life of the Holy Spirit, why would you choose to try to continue that life by your own

strength? **Think how offensive that is to Christ who “paid it all”**. It’s as if we approach his masterpiece with our own little paint brush to make some improvements!

- C. **V.5**, “*So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?*” I love how **John Stott** captured the point. “*The law says ‘Do this’; the gospel says ‘Christ has done it all’. The law requires works of human achievement; the gospel requires faith in Christ’s achievement The law makes demands and bids us obey; the gospel brings promises and bids us believe.*” [p.71, *BST on Gal.*]

**So, we know that believing “Christ crucified” is enough because when we believed we received the Holy Spirit.** Paul’s second reason is drawn from the OT. Listen to **vv.6-9**, “*So also Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*”

## **II. WE KNOW THAT BELIEVING “CHRIST CRUCIFIED” IS ENOUGH BECAUSE GOD GIVES CREDIT FOR BEING RIGHTEOUS TO THOSE WHO SIMPLY BELIEVE HIS PROMISE OF LIFE**

- A. Do you remember the context? Abraham and his wife Sarah had obeyed God by leaving their homeland far behind to go to a land God promised to give them. But what good is your own God-given land without a family to inherit it, and they were childless even into very old age. Then God took Abraham outside and said, “*Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.*” Then he said to him, “*So shall your offspring be.*”

And that's where this really stunning statement is made: "*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*" That is stunning because believing something isn't a moral accomplishment. It isn't a righteous thing. God is not saying, *that one righteous thing—believing—is so great I'll overlook all your other unrighteous deeds.* **Abram didn't do anything righteous yet God gave him credit for being righteous!**

Abram couldn't imagine at that point how God—who takes righteousness so seriously—could make that happen. God gave him a glimpse later, when he asked Abraham to sacrifice his one and only son, Isaac.

- B. That brings us to **Gal. 3:7**, "*Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.*" The Jews said they were children of Abraham because they alone had his genes, his DNA. **But what really makes someone a child of Abraham—one of those descendants more numerous than the stars—is having faith in the same kind of God-given promise that Abraham had.**
- C. **Vv.8-9**, "*Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'* So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." Like Abram, *our* faith in God's promise of salvation is credited to us as righteousness, and that promise is proven when we receive the unmistakable presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How foolish you have to be—how bewitched—to have believed that once and then to start adding *ands* to what is meant to be salvation by faith alone.

Now in the next vss. Paul says those who want to add an *and* to the gospel **are risking a terrible alternative**. In vv.10-14 notice again how much Paul relies on Scripture, quoting four OT passages.

*For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

### **III. WE KNOW THAT BELIEVING “CHRIST CRUCIFIED” IS ENOUGH BECAUSE TO DO OTHERWISE IS TO BE CURSED**

A. The Jewish believers pointed to the OT, “*But God said we must be circumcised as the sign of our covenant with him. How can you say the Gentiles don’t need to do this?*” His answer is to point to those same Scriptures. *Yes, God did say that, along with all the other laws. And Lev. 18:5 says, “The person who does these things will live by them.”* (“Amen to that!” said the Jewish believers.)

Paul continues, *But to gain everlasting life by them you have to do them all. Every one of them. Deut. 27:26 says, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” I can quote for you every word of the Torah, and I made it my business to obey it all, but in the end I could not keep even the first and greatest command—“to love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, mind and strength.” And what is the*

consequence of failing to keep even one command of the law? “**Cursed** is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

- B. But what did we learn from Abraham’s story? “**Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**” What does **Hab. 2:4** say? “*The righteous will live by **faith.***” That means those whom God regards as righteous are living by faith alone, not by even one thing they do. Not even one thing! Including circumcision. **It is good and pleasing to God for us to obey his commands but obeying God’s commands doesn’t add one thing to your qualifications, to your spiritual credentials.** You can’t put them on your passport to God’s Kingdom. All you need is your faith in Christ.
- C. He says in **v.12**, “*The law is not based on faith.*” No more than our laws are. *Illus.:* You’re in traffic court and the judge asks you, “Are you a lawful driver?” You reply, “I trust I am.” “That’s irrelevant,” says the judge. “Our red light camera says you blew through a stoplight on April 25 at the corner of Riverwoods and Rt 22. Your trust in your lawfulness doesn’t impress me in the least. I find you guilty and fine you \$100.” “*The law is not based on faith.*” So if you want to try to come to God by “being a good person” you’re going to lose. You’ll end up cursed by your guilt.
- D. **V.13**, “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’*” This is a very stark and sobering picture of what Jesus’ crucifixion was. Even though Jesus was crucified according to Roman law, the Jews who watched were thinking of God’s law in **Deut. 21:22-23**, “*If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not*

*leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse."*

When Jesus took on our sin he became "guilty of a capital offense" and was put to death. His death on the cross—the Roman version of the *pole*—signaled to the Jews that he was under God's curse. That's why on the cross he cried out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" As **John Stott** taught me, "*Jesus' crucifixion was an insurmountable obstacle to faith for the Jews*" because he died a God-cursed death. Remember what Isaiah prophesied:

*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.*

"...until they saw that the curse He bore was for them."

- E. That brings us to v.14, "*He redeemed us*" (that's what was happening when Christ was cursed on the cross) *in order that the blessing given to Abraham* ("all the world blessed through you") *might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*" Because God credits us with righteousness when we put our faith in Christ, and we receive the blessing God promised Abraham so long ago—"the promise of the Spirit." God living in us—think of it! *God living in us!*

## **Conclusion**

Every Sunday you look at this cross. Everyone here is very familiar with images of Christ on the cross, with songs about the cross. Paul could well say to us, "*Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.*" So don't forget what

our faith in Christ crucified means. Our faith in Christ alone. No *ands*. No additions.

- Our faith in Christ crucified means **we are declared righteous by God**. We are given Christ's righteousness while he died under God's curse for our sins.
- Our faith in Christ crucified means **we have received the Holy Spirit**.

We have no business trying to deserve God's favor by things we do, not even the commands in the Bible. Any Christian who tries to do that is ... well, a fool! Bewitched! Christ Jesus won God's favor for us. We do what is right and good now because we love him and because we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than in our own strength.

The recent issue of *Christianity Today* carried the testimony of **Casey Diaz**. He began, "*In prison, I was a shot caller. Shot callers have an elevated rank in the gang world. They are the power-brokers who determine who gets hurt (or killed) and who doesn't. They command respect.*" Because of his reputation he was kept in solitary confinement.

One time a Christian woman came to his cell. She couldn't see in but she spoke through the door. "*I'm going to pray for you. But there's something else I want to tell you: Jesus is going to use you.*" He was certain she was crazy, but she kept coming back, and each time she said the same thing. Here's what happened:

A year or so later, I was lying down in my cell, daydreaming, when I turned toward the wall opposite my bed. On that wall, something strange was happening. A movie was playing, a movie about my life. I saw myself as a young child, walking the old neighborhood at 9th and Kenmore. I witnessed incidents from my early days with the gang—everything in picture-perfect detail.

Then I saw a bearded man with long hair carrying a cross. As he trudged along, a mob of angry people shouted at him. When he

arrived on top of a knoll, rough-looking men nailed his hands and feet to the wooden beams and raised the cross so it stood between two other men on crosses.

What got to me most was when this man looked at me and said, “Darwin, I’m doing this for you.” I shuddered. Apart from the guards and my family, no one knew my real name. Everyone called me Casey—my nickname for as long as I could remember.

Then I heard the sound of breath leaving him. At that moment, I knew he had died.

That’s when I hit the floor in the middle of the cell. I started weeping because I knew, somehow, that this was Almighty God, even though I didn’t understand what he had done for me. After hitting the floor, I knew I had to get on my knees. I started confessing my sins: *God, I’m sorry for stabbing so many people. God, I’m sorry I robbed so many families.*

With each new confession, I felt another weight come off my shoulders. When I finished, I knew something major had happened.

I asked to see a chaplain, who opened his Bible and explained who Jesus was and told me that what I experienced in that cell was salvation. He handed me a Bible and urged me to start reading.

Today Casey is out of prison, living in L.A., where he owns a sign-making business and serves as a part-time pastor. [CT, 4/22/19]

**Now I ask you, if faith in Christ crucified can do that for a man, what fool would add anything to the gospel!**