

# HIGH PRIORITY

**WE NEED TO HEAR GOD!**  
Our Absolutely Necessary,  
Vitaly Essential, Crucial, Critical,  
Fundamental, Mandatory, Obligatory,  
Consequential, Important, Major,  
Significant, Persistent, Pressing and  
Urgent Need to Hear God.  
**IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT!**



## Why is it so important that we hear God?

How do we know *what* to believe if we do not hear God? What God says to us in the Bible is our “faith information.” This is *what* we “need to know.” The specific information (*the what*) we are called to believe.

- (Galatians 3:1–2 NIV) (1) You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (2) I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

## 1 Justification: When we hear God and believe him, we receive the Spirit, 3:1-2.

—Paul’s first question: Who has bewitched you?

Don’t miss this. Paul wants to know who they have been listening to because obviously they haven’t been listening to God. He is incredulous. They have chosen the voice of humans over the voice of God. How could this be? Have they been bewitched? Has someone cast a spell over them? What rationale could they possibly have for preferring the wisdom of humans over the word of God? And how could they miss the picture “before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified”?

—Paul’s second question: How did you receive the Spirit?

Now Paul asks his second question in an attempt to bring them to their senses. Did they receive the Holy Spirit by human effort or by believing what they had heard from God? What they had heard from God was the gospel—that by believing in Christ Jesus they would be justified by faith not by works.

- (Galatians 2:16 ESV) Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Paul is introducing the subject of the Spirit for

the first time in the Galatians letter, and in doing this he is equating receiving the Spirit with salvation and justification.

But the foolish Galatians were not hearing God, so they were believing the wrong things. They weren’t going on God information but on human information. That was their foolishness. Thus Paul’s simple question: Did you receive the Spirit by human effort or by believing God?

The tendency is to believe that the fool is “always the other guy.” Of course we would not be susceptible to itching ears, would we? And we would never be the foolish ones who turn away from the truth, would we?

It’s just those foolish Galatians ... the other guy ... except when it’s not ... and it is me being the fool.

- (2 Timothy 4:3–4 ESV) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

**Know this!** You will always be able to gather teachers to soothe your itching ears no matter how foolish you are and no matter how distant from God you are. And you will need that solace as you fight the inner battle between what you want to believe and the truth. But no worries. That alternate voice will always be there to tell you what you want to hear and to agree with your foolishness.

But does God agree with you? Or even better ... Do you agree with God? In your confession of faith, do you say what God says? That is what confession means—to say the same thing.

**Here’s the point: To say the same thing as God, then we have to know what God actually says.** We have to have “faith information.” So it is absolutely essential that we hear God above everything else. God’s voice must be dominant. He is God after all and there is no other. We need to hear God above our friends, our peers, all the news outlets, the scary political voices of this world and those false teachers who twist and turn God’s words to fit their preferences.

**And we need to hear God and God alone when it comes to the gospel.**

It seems that Peter forgot this important principle, at least for a time. Remember back in chapter two when he heard the people in his social network—the “certain men”—above the voice of God. He listened to people who were “not in step with the truth of the gospel.” You remember, don’t you?

- (Galatians 2:11–12 NIV) When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

Do we understand what happened? This was not an aberration but the norm. It was then and it is now that our greatest conflict in hearing God often comes, not from evil opponents, but from the people closest to us—our social network. You don’t have to be on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or even own a computer to have a social network. We are “on” (or in) a social network by virtue of being human. We are social beings. Our lives consist of connections with friends, family, classmates, colleagues, customers, neighbors, people at church, etc.

So let me ask, What drives a social network like Facebook or Twitter or YouTube? Or what drives your social network at the coffee shop or the local cafe or at church? Likes and shares. How many people like me. How many people want to share my life? The power of a social network depends on how many people “like” what you have posted—whether that is a photo, a video, a technical article, spiritual essay. Whatever it is, you are seeking the approval of your group, and not receiving their approval can be devastating.

With that in mind, let’s look again at Paul’s statement concerning people pleasers:

- (Galatians 1:10 ESV) For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

*Dave’s paraphrase:* “Am I now seeking “likes” on my social network, or am I seeking God’s approval? If I am more concerned about “likes” on my social network than God’s approval, then I am no servant of Christ because a true servant’s heart desire is to please his or her Master above all others.

## **2 Sanctification: We keep hearing God and keep believing him as the Spirit continues the finishing work of our salvation, 3:3-5.**

- (Galatians 3:3–5 NIV) (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? (4) Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? (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?

**—Paul’s third question: How foolish are you?**

Paul continues to try to bring them to their senses, to reestablish their spiritual coordinates. Are they so foolish that they can be influenced to take their eyes away from Christ crucified? Who is telling them that this is okay? And how can they be so foolish to believe what clearly contradicts what they have heard from God?

**—Paul’s fourth question: Do they really believe that by human effort they can finish the work that the Spirit began? Really?**

Are they so foolish that they believe that they don’t need the Spirit to continue in the faith? Are they so foolish to think that they can achieve the perfection that God promises by working for it rather than hearing what God has to say and believing God for these things?

**—Paul’s fifth question: Have you experienced all of this for nothing?**

They were invested in salvation by grace through faith alone. Why go back to a religion of human effort that only brought condemnation? Why allow humans to distort their vision of godliness and maturity? Why allow these legalists to obscure the truth of God?

**—Paul’s last question in this section is his first question: How does God give us his Spirit? Does it depend on human effort or by believing what God tells us?**

## **3 Abraham’s Example of Justification: Abraham heard God and believed God, 3:6.**

- (Galatians 3:6 NIV) So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Abraham is an excellent example of justification—of being made right with God. Abraham believed what God said, and God credited that to him as righteousness.

- (Genesis 15:4–6 ESV) And behold, **the word of the LORD came to him:** “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” **And he believed the LORD**, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Abram was also an excellent example of the finishing work of God in a believer. Abram believed the “faith information”—what the Lord “*had said*”—and obeyed.

- (Genesis 12:1, 4 NIV) (1) **The Lord had said to Abram, “Go** from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ... (4) **So Abram went**, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

God spoke to Abraham, and Abraham heard God and believed him. He trusted and relied on the divine information. He wasn’t even told where to go, but he acted on the information that he was given.

- (Hebrews 11:8 NIV) By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

His “faith information” from God was go, so he went. He didn’t demand full disclosure, and he surely couldn’t have understood what was going to happen. He simply believed God and trusted him for the path ahead.

How about us? We sing “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” but have we really decided to follow Jesus? Because it doesn’t really seem like we are. We are willing to follow here and here and here, but just not there. So not really following, are we?

The foolishness of the Galatians was choosing sight over faith—the familiar way over God’s way.

- (2 Corinthians 5:7 NIV) For we live by faith, not by sight.