

Lesson 9 – Galatians 3:1-5

Randy Thompson
Valley Bible Church
www.valleybible.net

Review/Introduction

Your greatest overall need (either physical, emotional, or spiritual) is freedom from the penalty and power of **sin**. Good works, moral living, heredity, organizational membership, or religious observance do not get you into heaven. Christ offers salvation from sin (Colossians 2:13-14) to all who exercise the gift of true saving faith (John 3:16), turning from their sins (Hebrews 6:1) and surrendering their life to Christ (Luke 9:23-26; John 10:27-28), trusting only in Him for salvation from sin (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The true gospel is the message of God's grace, not human works.

“Grace” is God's sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”.

Paul is an apostle by the will of God, not by people. Also, he is not sent by others, but by Christ and the Father. The Galatians bear the responsibility for entertaining a different, distorted gospel. But the false teachers who distort the true gospel by adding works and turn grace into non-grace and the gospel into a non-gospel, Paul condemns to eternal destruction.

As a slave of Christ and not a people pleaser, Paul must speak when the gospel is in jeopardy. As slaves of Christ we must speak also.

Paul started his defense of the gospel of grace by showing that the gospel that he preached, the true gospel, was not learned from other people nor found in Scripture-invalidating tradition nor did he invent it. He received it directly from the Lord Jesus.

The evidence that the gospel that Paul received was divine revelation was the dramatic change in his own life. God changed Paul from persecutor to preacher, from slave of sin to slave of Christ. Only the gospel of grace can make new, not the non-gospel of works. Paul's dramatic change demonstrated the power of the gospel.

Paul did not get the gospel from the apostles, but was welcomed as an apostle with the same gospel as the apostles. Paul's confrontation of Peter demonstrated his equality with the other apostles and that the Judaizers were enemies of the gospel. Peter, the rest of the Jews at Antioch, and Barnabas's hypocrisy was “conduct not in step with the truth of the gospel”. They were walking in a manner inconsistent with their new life in Christ. Hypocrisy demonstrates a powerless non-gospel instead of a powerful gospel of grace.

The great doctrinal truth of justification leaves no room for law/works because it treats disdainfully grace.

Today, we begin chapter three, moving into the main doctrinal section of the letter, looking at the defense of justification by faith. Paul begins by asking five questions of the Galatians driving home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. These questions are meant to stir the thoughtless Galatians (and us) to think seriously about the gospel.

Paul's defense of justification by faith – The spiritual baptism argument (3:1-5)

1. Question One (3:1)

¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?

¹O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. (ESV)

Paul had just finished saying that by returning to law or thinking that righteousness comes through the law (i.e., justification – the Greek noun form of “to justify”), grace is declared invalid or despised (nullified). Works for salvation or sanctification declares invalid grace because if people could be justified by works, then Christ died needlessly.

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. (Galatians 2:21)

Unfortunately, the NASB omits the Greek interjection that the ESV translates. “O” is an interjection used to express emotion at the beginning of a clause. These questions, particularly this first one, are emotionally charged for Paul. He is filled with emotion with what the Galatians have believed.

Paul is so emotional that he addresses them directly as “you foolish Galatians”. This is the first time since 1:11 that Paul addressed them directly. Previously, he used the personal “brethren”. This time he uses the impersonal “Galatians” which fits the tone of his introductory interjection.

¹¹For I would have you know, **brethren**, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. (Galatians 1:11)

“Foolish” describes a person without understanding, dull-witted, having an unwillingness to use one’s mental faculties to understand, mental laziness and carelessness, lacking discernment. Paul is calling out the Galatians for failing to use their mental capacities to examine the errors of the Judaizers in light of Scripture.

Paul is emotional regarding the Galatians – sad, disappointed, perplexed (to be at a loss, to be dazed and confused, to be disturbed).

¹⁹My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— ²⁰but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am **perplexed** about you. (Galatians 4:19-20)

❖ Does the poor spiritual state of people in your life hit you emotionally?

Paul asks the Galatians “who has bewitched you?”. “Bewitched” means to charm or fascinate in a misleading way, as by flattery, false promises, or occult power. The latter meaning is to mislead by an “evil eye” and so to charm or “bewitch”. Hence the NET renders the word “Who has cast a spell on you?”.

“Who” is singular perhaps alluding to a prominent Judaizer or even Satan as the leader of the bewitching.

The Greeks were fascinated with the “evil eye”, that someone could take power over you, bewitch you to do their bidding. Paul calls them out for allowing the bewitching to occur.

❖ **What preemptive actions are you taking to prevent yourself from being bewitched?**

“Publicly portrayed” was used to describe important official notices or proclamations in which the validity of a fact or condition is proclaimed.

“As crucified” is used as denoting a past completed action with ongoing effect or results. The crucifixion was a one-time event that has affects today in your life.

In what ways was Jesus Christ publicly portrayed as crucified? The obvious is the proclamation of the gospel of the grace of Christ. God’s sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in Christ in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce

Another is what Paul had just taught at the end of chapter two. The crucifixion of the believer resulting in Christ living through you publicly portrays Him.

¹⁹For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

❖ **Is Christ proclaimed in both these ways in your life?**

The Galatians should have been immune to the bewitching due to being fascinated with grace. The verbal and demonstrative proclamation of Christ crucified is a strong deterrent against being bewitched.

2. Question Two (3:2)

²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

²Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? (ESV)

Paul now asks his second question, this time clearly rhetorical. These rhetorical questions are designed to convict the Galatians of error regarding the false, non-gospel of Christ plus works.

Paul believed that the Galatians had exhibited evidences of salvation. He knew they had received the Spirit.

At the moment of conversion, when a person repents, trusts/believes, and surrenders their life to Christ (exercises the gift of true saving faith), many things happen. God justifies, regenerates, sanctifies, and adopts. The Holy Spirit also indwells, seals, baptizes, and gifts. The Holy Spirit functions as our helper, teaching us and guiding us in our spiritual growth toward righteousness, providing the power to wage war with the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17).

If you have exercised the gift of true saving faith in Christ then you have been regenerated. It is the Spirit who regenerates and renews.

⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵**He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,** ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

Indwelling is the Holy Spirit's act by which He permanently takes up residence in the believer.

¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, **that He may be with you forever;** (John 14:16)

¹⁹Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God,** and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,** ¹⁴**who is given as a pledge of our inheritance,** with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Sealing is the Holy Spirit's work which guarantees that the believer belongs to God; providing eternal-security and assurance of salvation. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in three different passages, all written by Paul (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). In Paul's day, an official document would be sealed with wax. An impression would be made in the hot wax with the signet ring of the king or another high ranking official. The seal would signify that the document was official. The Spirit of God is our seal.

²¹Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²²**who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.** (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

¹³In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,** (Ephesians 1:13)

³⁰Do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** (Ephesians 4:30)

Spiritual baptism is God's act where the believer is united with Christ in His death and into union with other believers in the body of Christ.

³Or do you not know that **all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?** ⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, (Romans 6:3-5)

²⁷For **all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; **for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** (Galatians 3:27-28)

¹³For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

Only believers have the Spirit and exhibit the blessings of Spirit indwelling.

⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ... ¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ... ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:9, 14, 16)

Paul's rhetorical question is clear. If you have the Spirit, then you are a believer, and you received the Spirit by grace through faith. Works had nothing to do with that.

❖ **What marks of Spirit indwelling are evident in your life?**

3. Question 3 (3:3)

³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (ESV)

Paul asks a third question to challenge the Judaizer's heretical beliefs being entertained by the Galatians. Here is the foolish mindset regarding the completion of our salvation. This is the second time in three verses that Paul uses the word "foolish". Are you so without understanding, so dull-witted, so mentally lazy, so lacking discernment, so failing to use your brains? This second time, Paul adds "so" to amplify the emotion in his question.

The words for "begun" and "being perfected" are used to describe the beginning and completing of a sacrifice. Paul viewed the life of a believer as a sacrifice to God.

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

"By the flesh" refers to your own efforts, your own way, in your own strength.

Salvation is not 2/3 grace through faith and 1/3 works (or some fraction developed in a person's own mind). You began by regeneration by the Spirit (John 3:4-8; Titus 3:5). You were sealed for the day of redemption by the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). There are no works (law) that can add to Christ's perfect sacrifice. There are no additions to by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. You cannot start with regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit and then complete your salvation in your own efforts, your own way.

❖ **Do you practically live like you are a foolish Galatian?**

But what about the progressive sanctification process in-between regeneration and glorification? Is this process X% God and Y% you? Some passages might suggest that.

¹Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that **you excel still more**. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

²like newborn babies, **long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**, (1 Peter 2:2)

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Is “excelling still more”, “longing for the pure milk of the word”, and “working out your salvation with fear and trembling” your own efforts, your own way, in your own strength? It could very well be. Does that equal spiritual growth? No, it equals self – self-inflation, self-knowledge, self-works.

Progressive sanctification is enabled by grace – God’s sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. Spiritual growth (sanctification) is brought about by grace infused walking in the Spirit.

¹⁰**But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain**; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh**. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (Galatians 5:16-17)

²⁰Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹equip you in every good thing to do His will, **working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ**, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)

“There is a strong delusion among believers that is so prevalent, and that is the feeling that: fruit in my Christian life is by my own efforts or fruit is by the flesh. It is the thought that if we perform certain things, we will become spiritual. It is living by the law that progress comes by performance.” (Don Anderson quoted at preceptaustin.org)

❖ In what strength are you pursuing sanctification?

4. Question 4 (3:4)

⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? (ESV)

“Suffer” originally meant to experience something whether good or bad, favorable or unfavorable. However, it came to mean physical or psychological suffering, experiencing something trying, distressing or painful. Paul’s usage is always in this negative sense (1 Corinthians 12:26; 2 Corinthians 1:6; Galatians 3:4; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:12).

They suffered “so many things”. Their faith in Christ was impactful which brought on suffering from the world.

³²But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. (Hebrews 10:32-33)

“Vain” means without a cause or legitimate reason, for no purpose, and being without any result, fruitlessly, needlessly. If they really were not believers as would be evident by them returning to works, then that suffering would have been needless.

“If indeed it was in vain” indicates that Paul found it hard to believe that the Galatians would abandon grace and turn back to works.

❖ In what ways do you suffer for the name of Christ?

5. Question 5 (3:5)

⁵So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

⁵Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— (ESV)

Paul has asked four questions:

1. ¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?
2. ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
3. ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
4. ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Now Paul will ask his final question driving home that works of the Law are unable to justify or sanctify.

“He” could refer to either the Father or Christ.

²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom **the Father will send in My name**, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

²⁶“When the Helper comes, whom **I will send to you from the Father**, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, (John 15:26)

Either way, the Spirit is provided. “Provides” (ESV supplies) means a liberal supply or abundantly, a generous and lavish provision. Its present tense usage indicates that Spirit is a continual provision. All believers are lavishly provided the Spirit through indwelling and have access to His power through filling.

❖ **How would your life be different if you were filled with the Spirit more consistently?**

Similarly, “work” is in the present tense indicating that at the time of this writing there were sign miracles being done at Galatia.

Does God’s lavish supply of the Spirit and the working of miracles happen because you do the works of the Law or because of grace through faith? Clearly rhetorical, God works wonders in the lives of people as they surrender their life to Christ by grace through faith, not by earning it through works.

The baptism of the Spirit occurred by grace through faith; through the gospel. They experienced this so they must not return to works in either salvation or sanctification.

❖ **Are you trying to earn salvation and/or the lavish supply of the Spirit through works?**

Conclusion

The Galatians are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul is emotionally pleading with the Galatians. He has presented the authentication of the Gospel through the source (God) and its power (persecutor to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ). Now Paul moves into the main doctrinal section of the letter, looking at the defense of justification by faith. He began by asking five questions of the Galatians driving home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Those same questions are for us today.

Additional Study

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today’s Questions
 - In what ways might the world, the flesh, and/or the Devil have bewitched you?
 - In what ways is Christ being publicly displayed as crucified in by your life?
 - How are you pursuing spiritual growth – legalism or grace-infused Spirit filling?
 - What impact does your grace-infused life-of-Christ-through-you life bring suffering?
 - How is progressive sanctification seen in your life?