

Galatians 3:1-5

Introduction: in 2:14-21, Paul explains the Gospel. This next part of the letter is a defense of that gospel. The question exists: how can God accept me? The answer is this: I cannot be saved by anything I do; I can only be saved by what Jesus did when He died on the cross and rose again. There is no way for me to make myself right with God because I am unrighteous. But Jesus made things right through His crucifixion and resurrection. All that is left for me to do is repent of my sin and receive the gift of God's free grace by putting my faith in God's Son. In this section Paul asks the Galatians a series of questions to help them think more clearly.

An emotional, critical exclamation concerning our thinking process—3:1a

- 1) ¹ *O foolish* [ἀνόητος] *Galatians!* (cf. 1:11; 3:15, etc. where he calls them “brothers”)
 - a) The opposite of wise or skillful. This is not a matter of intelligence. It is often associated with a lack of faith that clouds their judgment.
 - i) Similar to Jesus in Luke 24:25
 - b) They are not showing a skillful use of theology. A false teacher is deceiving them!
 - c) Few things are more tragic or disappointing than a Christian who deserts the purity of the Gospel for a false form of Christianity that presumes to improve on the finished work of Christ. (MacArthur)

Is spiritual deception of a Christian possible? (question # 1)—3:1b

- 1) The cunningly deceptive false teacher—*Who has cast a spell* [aor. act. ind. βασκαίνω] *on you^{pl}* (cf. 1:6)
 - a) Cf. account of Franz Mesmer (1734-1815) and people being mesmerized, similar to what we might call hypnotism today.
 - b) This was a satanic/demonic temptation to be subjective regarding the truth of the gospel.
- 2) What was the purpose of the deception?—*that you^{pl} should not obey/be persuaded by* [pres. pass. inf. πείθω] *the truth*, [phrase not in CT]
 - a) They are abandoning the Truth for the deceptions of this false teacher.
- 3) What was Paul's blatantly obvious message to the Galatians prior to the deception? *before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly* (and publicly) *portrayed* [aor. pass. ind. προγράφω] *among you^{pl} as having been crucified* [pf. pass. ptc. σταυρώω]?
 - a) They have heard the facts and significance of the Truth. There is no excuse for being deceived. They can't claim, “But we didn't know!”
 - b) The eyes of their heart have been diverted from the main message of the public billboard (the Cross) to the graffiti on the billboard (the Law).

A piercing question regarding their reception of the Holy Spirit? (question # 2)—3:2

- 1) ² *This only I want* [pres. act. ind. θέλω] *to learn* [aor. act. inf. μαθάνω] *from you^{pl}: did you^{pl} receive* [aor. act. ind. λαμβάνω] *the Spirit ...* (cf. Acts 13:52; Galatians 4:6)

- Paul proceeds to ask four more questions after this! He takes the role of student. “Teach me!” he says. He is trying to bring them back to reality.
 - He is not doubting their salvation. He knows they received the Spirit! The faith that brings justification also brings the indwelling presence of the Spirit. The congregations of Galatia (1:2) were composed of genuine believers.
- a) Performance based?—*by* [ἐκ] *works* [ἔργον] *of the law* [νόμος]
 - i) They were mainly Gentiles who didn’t have the Law!
 - b) Faith based?—*or by* [ἐκ] (attentive) *hearing* [ἀκοή] *of faith* [πίστις]?
 - 2) The Holy Spirit is not the *goal* of the Christian life but its *source*. He is not the *product* of faithful living but is the *power* behind it.

How do we mature as Christians? (questions # 3-5)—3:3-4

- 1) The danger of their lack of faith and improper thinking—3:3a (question # 3)
 - a) ³ *Are you^{pl} so* [οὔτω] *foolish* [ἀνόητος]?
- 2) Their understanding of the maturing process—3:3b (question # 4)
 - a) Past—*Having begun* [aor. dep. ptc. ἐνάρχομαι] *by the Spirit*,
 - i) The Spirit gave you life!
 - b) Present—*are you^{pl} now being completed* [pres. dep. ind. ἐπιτελέω] *by the flesh*?
 - i) What they were “in Adam”: by observing a ritual calendar (4:10), by being circumcised (5:2), by attempting to keep the Law (6:13).
 - ii) Cf. 2nd Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 1:6
- 3) Don’t waste your suffering—3:4 (question # 5)
 - a) ⁴ *Have you^{pl} suffered* [aor. act. ind. πάσχω] *so many things for nothing* [εἰκῆ]?
 - i) —*if indeed it was for nothing* [εἰκῆ].
 - b) Suffered such things as: Acts 14:1-7, 19-20, 22

Inference: what God is doing in the Galatians believers—3:5

- 1) ⁵ *Therefore, ...* (summarizing the inference from 3:1-4)
- 2) What exactly is God doing in their midst? (question # 6; cf. 3:2)
 - a) Internally—*the One* (Christ?) *who provides* [pres. act. ptc. ἐπιχορηγέω] *the Spirit to you^{pl}*
 - i) ἐπιχορηγέω—to provide out of his own expense, to make available whatever is necessary to help with an attitude of generosity
 - b) Externally—*and works* [pres. act. ptc. ἐνεργέω] *miracles* [δύναμις] *among* [ἐν] *you^{pl}*,
 - i) cf. Acts 14:3, 8-11, 19-20
- 3) How is God doing this? *is this ...*
 - a) Performance based?—*by* [ἐκ] *works* [ἔργον] *of the law* [νόμος]
 - i) They were mainly Gentiles who didn’t have the Law!
 - b) Faith based?—*or by* [ἐκ] *hearing* [ἀκοή] *of faith* [πίστις]?

Take-home truth/summary:

- 1) While experience in itself is not entirely reliable evidence of spiritual reality, it is nevertheless powerful when closely linked with and built on scriptural truth.

- 2) The Galatians do not need to be circumcised or observe the works of the law in order to belong to the people of God because they have clearly received the Holy Spirit; the reception of the Spirit *is the mark* that signifies that one belongs to the people of God. (Schreiner)