

# An everyday gospel

Galatians 3:1-5

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Have you ever passed through a time of uncertainty or confusion in your Christian life? Maybe life had become difficult, painful or disappointing. Maybe God was not answering your prayers the way you wanted, or maybe you felt you had been a disappointment to God and were not sure if He still loved you. Or maybe you were just really confused how the Christian life was really supposed to work. If so, you can probably relate with the Galatians.

*“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Did you suffer so many things in vain— if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup> Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:1-5)*

The word here translated “foolish” is best defined as one who has a mind or knowledge and does not use it. In this case, the Galatians knew and had experienced the truth, and were now turning from it. Like a parent may tell a child, “You know better than that.”

“Who has bewitched you?” is a rhetorical question. It is a question whose answer should be obviously clear. The Judaizers had bewitched them, misled them. We don’t fully know if the Galatians were aware of it or not, but the Galatians had been misled. It was a subtle misleading. The Judaizers were professing followers of Christ. They must have also acknowledged the death

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They just believed that it was not enough. It was as if faith in Jesus Christ was part one of salvation, but for complete salvation you also needed to become Jewish, be circumcised, follow the dietary laws, the rituals and observe the special feasts. To some it probably sounded like the same gospel, but it was clearly different. The Judaizers focused on who we are and what we have done, while Paul's gospel focused on who Christ is and what He had done. That is Satan's strategy of deception. He takes the truths of God and changes them just enough to lead people to destruction. As we see in 2 Corinthians 11:14, *"for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."* We must be on guard against a false gospel. It looks good, but when we truly begin to understand the teaching we find it is heretical. One way to look for false teachers is to compare their teachings to these truths of the reformation, "By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone."

We, too, have subtle false teaching in the Christian church today. Beware of materials whose primary source is something other than scripture or in which Jesus Christ is not central. These writings at times are nothing more than humanistic self-help books presented as Christian. Beware of teachings that have an emotional experience as their goal instead of the glory of God. Beware of any teaching that seeks to add something to the gospel. For example, salvation through Christ plus speaking in tongues, or Christ plus baptism, or Christ plus offerings. Also be on guard against teachings whose chief agenda is to use God to help people get what they want. We, like the Galatians, are prone to being led astray if we are not careful.

***"It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified."***

The Galatians were not at Jesus' crucifixion, so what does Paul mean by "Before your eyes, Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?" To better understand this verse we need to remember Paul's words a few verses earlier. In Galatians 2:20 Paul writes this, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."* This was Paul's description of what happened to him and to us at salvation.

Paul had presented this to them. This was the concept and the reality of Christ Crucified in their lives.

The old "Paul," with His sinful desires and perspective, had been put to death and now the Spirit of God had birthed in him a new spirit with a new nature. We do not know all the details, but we do know that when the Galatians became believers, when they were "crucified" with Christ, their lives were transformed. Miracles occurred (verse 5), and they were changed in a way that was publicly visible. It was more than just claiming to be a Christian or praying a prayer, their lives had truly been transformed.

The Galatians were able to observe the outward life change that the gospel had worked in each other's lives. It was gloriously miraculous what Jesus Christ did in all of their lives. And they saw it with their own eyes. Yes, Paul's gospel is from Christ and yes, Paul was given the authority of a true apostle, but in addition to this they needed to remember the public testimony of the

transforming power of Jesus Christ that they had witnessed with their own eyes. This gospel was the true gospel.

We, too, must not forget the changes that Christ has already worked in and through our lives. This is an undeniable testimony of the truth of the gospel. What has Christ changed in your life?

***“<sup>2</sup> Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”***

Receiving the Spirit in this case is a synonym for being saved (Acts 11:15-17; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Here Paul is only giving them two options. Either by works or by faith. Some might have argued for a third option, “Yes, Christ did die on the cross for our sins, but we also need to add our works to the sacrifice of Christ to be saved.” Many like this option because it saves their pride by not receiving a “handout.” It is self-made. It is earned. But any option that includes our works is nothing more than spiritual arrogance. There was nothing that we could do to save ourselves. Some would argue that this is too good to be true. Surely we have to do something to earn our salvation, but we see clearly in the story of the thief on the cross that He was saved unto heaven, but had no opportunity to then do anything beneficial for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:39-43). He did no good works, but yet he was saved. We see this truth clearly in Ephesians 2:8-9:

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

***“<sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”***

Living by the Spirit is putting our full trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, our sanctification and our every spiritual need. Living by the flesh is putting our trust in ourselves and in the resources of this world. Paul could tell that their trust had turned towards observing religious rituals and trusting in their own “goodness”. Paul is challenging them. You received the spirit by faith. Does faith then cease to help us? Must we then be made holy by our own actions, our own will power and our own strength? No, God is leading us in the process of being made perfect. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. This God-given faith was used to usher us into salvation. In the same way our faith in Christ will guide us to walk daily in the spirit.

The same truths that describe salvation are the same truths that remain as we live the Christian life. God draws us to Himself for salvation. He then continues to turn our hearts to Him as we live the Christian life (John 6:44, John 6:65). God granted faith unto salvation and continues to grant faith as we trust in Him daily in our walk with Christ (Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 2:8-9). The spirit convicted us of sin at salvation and continues to convict us of sin to turn us from sin (John 16:8). We repented of sin and confessed this sin to God when we entered into salvation. An ongoing repentance and confession continues to draw us near to God and a right relationship with Him

(Romans 10:9-19; 1 John 1:9. We were helpless and totally dependent on God's grace for salvation and we continue to be helpless and dependent on God's grace to live a holy life (Philippians 4:19; Philippians 4:13).

God's grace is yours. You don't have to earn it to keep it. Just like you did not earn it to receive it. It is a gift of God. Be encouraged. You now have the full love of God, permanently. Walk in the faith that has been given you.

***“<sup>4</sup> Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?”***

This verse does not tell us anything about the source or type of suffering that the Galatians had endured, but Paul is calling them to remember. They had suffered because they had believed in Paul's gospel. Would they now turn from such a gospel that had been precious enough to suffer for?

***“<sup>5</sup> Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?”***

God has worked undoubtedly in your life. Was it by knowing the law, which you did not know, and doing good works, which you had not done, or was it a free gift that you received when you heard the word and were granted faith to believe? God has supplied the Spirit to you by faith. Receive it. Believe it. Walk in it. Everyday. From this day forward.