

HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT

TEXT: GALATIANS 3:1-5

Introduction:

1. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is very practical.
2. The theme of the epistle is salvation from sin by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Mixing together law and grace is renounced and is described as "another gospel" and a "perverted" gospel (1:6-9).
4. Now as we move into chapter 3, the emphasis is on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (3:1-5).
5. *The Scofield Study Bible* says: "The gift of the Spirit is by faith, not by law-works."
6. There are five questions here in our text, and I have framed my outline around them.

I. WHO HATH BEWITCHED YOU? (3:1)

1. The word "bewitched" is a strong word. This is the only time it is used in the New Testament. AT Robertson in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* defines "bewitched" as "to bring evil on one by feigned praise or the evil eye, to lead one astray by evil arts."
2. HA Ironside put it this way, "How is it that you seem to come under a sort of spell, so that you have lost your grasp of the truth, and your hearts and minds have become clouded by error?"
3. Paul wanted to know what had gotten into them. They understood the Gospel. They had known the truth, but had turned from it. They were disobedient (3:1).
4. They were "foolish" (3:1, 3). Proverbs 14:8 says, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit."
5. The Galatians were foolish. They were deceived. They were "bewitched" by false teachers.

II. RECEIVED YE THE SPIRIT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW, OR BY THE HEARING OF FAITH? (3:2)

1. The Galatians were Gentiles, not Jews. They were saved by "the hearing of faith" (3:2).
2. This means they received the Holy Spirit by faith, not by the works of the law.
3. Andrew Murray wrote, "He reminds them that by the preaching of faith they had received the Holy Spirit. He had preached Christ to them; they had

accepted that Christ and had received the Holy Spirit in power. But what happened? Having begun in the Spirit, they tried to perfect the work that the Spirit had begun in the flesh by their own effort. We find the same teaching in the epistle to the Corinthians. Now, we have here a solemn discovery of what the great need is in the Church of Christ. God has called the Church of Christ to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the Church is living, for the most part, in the power of human flesh, and of will and energy and effort apart from the Spirit of God."

4. No one in the Old Testament, and no one in the New Testament, ever received the Holy Spirit by the works of the law.

III. HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT, ARE YE NOW MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH? (3:3)

1. For the second time, Paul calls them "foolish" (3:1, 3).
2. It is very foolish to think we can be made perfect (complete, mature) by keeping the law (cf. 3:10).
3. Legalism has two aspects. First, there is the error of thinking that salvation comes from keeping the law.
4. The second error is believing that sanctification comes by the works of the law. The Bible teaches we are saved by grace and kept by grace -- not "by the flesh" (3:3).
5. Some people understand that we are saved by grace through faith, but they think they have to keep the law in order to stay saved.
6. Andrew Murray said, "The Galatians received the Holy Spirit, but what was begun by the Spirit they tried to perfect in the flesh. How? They fell back again under Judaizing teachers who told them they must be circumcised. They began to seek their religion in external observances. And so Paul uses that expression about those teachers who had them circumcised so 'that they may glorify in your flesh' (Galatians 6:13)."

IV. HAVE YE SUFFERED SO MANY THINGS IN VAIN? (3:4)

1. When the Galatians first trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, they exposed themselves to bitter persecution, both from religious Jews who hated the Gospel, as well as from heathen friends and relatives who did not understand the Gospel.
2. Paul is now asking them if their suffering was "in vain."

3. In other words, in going back to a works-salvation, they were saying their persecutors were right all along, because all false religions teach salvation by works (cf. 5:11).
4. By going back to a works-salvation, the Galatians were aligning themselves with the enemies of the Gospel.

V. HE THEREFORE THAT MINISTERETH TO YOU THE SPIRIT, AND WORKETH MIRACLES AMONG YOU, DOETH HE IT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW, OR BY THE HEARING OF FAITH? (3:5)

1. This fifth question is the longest.
2. It is somewhat similar to Paul's second question (3:2). In Galatians 3:2, Paul says that believers receive the Holy Spirit by faith, not by the works of the law. Here in verse 5, Paul refers to the various ministries of the Holy Spirit.
3. Paul refers to the ministry that he had among them, including miracles.
4. You will recall that the Judaizers were attacking Paul's apostolic authority, and so he began this letter by defending it (1:1, 11, 12).
5. In Paul's day, miracles were the evidence of apostolic authority.
6. Second Corinthians 12:12 says, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
7. Hebrews 2:3, 4 says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
8. Paul had to remind them that it was he who preached the Gospel to them (3:5; cf. 3:1); and it was he who had ministereth to them the Holy Spirit, and worked miracles among them.
9. None of this had been in "the flesh" (cf. 3:3). None of this was by the works of the law (3:2, 5). Paul never preached the law. He preached the Gospel.
10. The Judaizers did not preach the Gospel to them. The Judaizers "bewitched them" (3:1). They were "false brethren" (cf. 2:4).

CONCLUSION:

I will conclude with an illustration by Andrew Murray. "You may all know what shunting is on a railway. A locomotive with its train may be traveling in a certain direction, and the points at some place may not be properly opened or closed, and unobservingly it is shunted off to the right or to the left. And if that takes place, for instance, on a dark night, the train goes in the wrong direction, and the people might never know it until they have gone some distance.

"And just so, God gives Christians the Holy Spirit with this intention-that every day, all their life, should be lived in the power of the Spirit. A man cannot live one hour of a godly life unless by the power of the Holy Spirit. He may live a proper, consistent life, as people call it, an irreproachable life, a life of virtue and diligent service. But to live a life acceptable to God, in the enjoyment of God's salvation and God's love, to live and walk in the power of the new life -- he cannot do it unless he is guided by the Holy Spirit every day and every hour."