

Galatians

Chapter Three

Introduction

If you are a Christian, God the Holy Spirit lives within you. His indwelling and overflowing presence is the key to joy and victory in your Christian life. You want to be filled with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, and led by the Spirit in order to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Since the empowering presence of the Spirit is so crucial to your walk, it is important to discover how to daily experience Him in and through your life. For example: Do you need to clean-up your life before you can experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit? Many Christians believe so; they say that the Spirit is the *Holy* Spirit and can't fill *unholy* vessels. Another example: Do you need to prove your sincerity to God before you can experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit? Many Christians believe so; they hold what they call "tarrying meetings" where they *tarry*, or wait, upon God to pour out His Spirit - proving their sincerity by praying and fasting.

Here is a simple way of summarizing what I am saying: When it comes to your experiencing the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, is it a *goal* to be achieved ? or is it a *gift* to be received?

Paul has the answer for you in verse five of chapter three, where he asks,

Galatians 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Look at that verse in detail for a moment. Paul uses the phrase, "He who supplies the Spirit to you..." He is describing your experience of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. It is something that is available to you in never ending supply from your Lord, Jesus Christ. And then Paul asks the same question we asked a moment ago regarding how you experience the Spirit in and

through your lives; he asks, "Does [God] do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" If it is by the works of the law, then it is a goal you must achieve - by being holy vessels who tarry on God. If it is by the hearing of faith, then it is a gift you can receive.

Without hesitation Paul tells you that you experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as a gift, not a goal; it is received, not achieved. That should come as wonderful news to you! The daily "supply" of God's Spirit you need for any and every situation you face is immediately available to you by faith.

As we work through chapter three, we will see these two points developed: #1 God Always Supplies His Spirit To You By Way Of Faith, and #2 God Never Supplied His Spirit To The Jew By Works Of The Flesh.

#1 God Always Supplies His Spirit To You By Way Of Faith (v1-4)

The believers at Galatia had come to believe that the Spirit is earned when you achieve a certain goal - some work of righteousness prescribed by the Jewish law, like circumcision or keeping the sabbath. Paul did not mince words in correcting them:

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

"Foolish" is a word that describes mental laziness. They were not stupid; they simply failed to exercise spiritual discernment when faced with the false teaching of the Judaizers that you must work to earn the Spirit's empowering in your life.

"Bewitched" can have the connotation of being flattered. There is something inherently flattering about performing good works; it is pleasing to the flesh, to the old sinful nature, to think you have done something that merits God's blessing you.

Paul reminds them that Jesus was "crucified" on their behalf. The Cross of Jesus Christ means that there is nothing you can do to earn God's salvation. Salvation is a gift, not a goal. And the

particular way Paul uses the word "crucified," it's particular verb tense, means that the crucifixion was a historical fact with continuing results. You can no more stay saved by works than you could have been saved by works in the first place. You do not and cannot experience the empowering presence of the Spirit by works of righteousness.

Galatians 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

When you are born-again, it is not the end of a life of effort; it is the beginning of a life of empowering! The gospel makes no demands on you, save one: That you believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ! There is nothing you can do because Jesus has done it already! Paul applies this same principle to your going on to live out the Christian life:

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Salvation was by grace through faith; so is what we call *sanctification* - living out the Christian life moment-by-moment, day-by-day. Your imperfect and still sinful flesh cannot help or improve on the work that God has begun in you. As one author put it, "a higher level of living does not bring the Holy Spirit; rather... the Holy Spirit... [brings you to] a higher level of living."

Galatians 3:4 Have you suffered so many things in vain; if indeed it was in vain?

Those who promote works of righteousness always look down upon and persecute those who live by faith having confidence in God's grace to supply the Spirit. They mock you; they call you shallow. That's because works always lead to arrogant pride. Beloved, go on in the simplicity of your faith - not being affected by their criticisms.

Cutbacks and downsizing are the philosophy of our world today. Many of you now have to go out and purchase things that were previously supplied to you. Not so with God! He wants to abundantly supply you with His Spirit. Jesus promised you rivers of living water flowing forth from your life; all Spiritual blessings in

heavenly places are yours; you have everything you need for life and godliness.

The supply of the Spirit is abundant and inexhaustible. *But you must tap into it!* The reason many believers - all of us in one way or another - fail to tap into the supply of the Spirit is because we believe that the Spirit is a goal to be achieved. He is not; He is a gift to be received moment-by-moment, day-by-day. By faith you are to believe that the Spirit is empowering you for any and every situation you face.

Have you failed God in some way? Forgot your devotions? Didn't get up early enough to pray? Haven't read the Word in a while? Been missing fellowship? *The Spirit is still available to you by faith!* Doing all those things won't earn you more of His empowering presence; His empowering presence, received and realized by faith, will cause you to desire and to do all those things!

#2 God Never Supplied His Spirit
To The Jew By Works Of The Flesh
(v5-29)

The false teachers were promoting a return to works of righteousness according to the Jewish law. By being circumcised, by keeping the sabbath, by observing the Jewish law, they said you would earn the empowering of God's Spirit in your life. Their argument causes confusion in part because of the misunderstanding many people have about the relationship between the Old Testament law and New Testament living. Don't you sometimes hear people refer to God as "the God of the Old Testament" and "the God of the New Testament?" There is a general misunderstanding that what God did in Old Testament times is different from and completely foreign to the grace of the New Testament.

Nothing could be farther from the truth! There is a wonderful, a divine, continuity between the two Testaments. They agree in all parts. Salvation is and always was by grace through faith; sanctification is and always was by grace through faith.

Paul goes to the heritage of the Jews, to Abraham, to prove that God has not changed.

Galatians 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?;

Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Abraham is the father of the Jews. The Jews took great pride in being descended from Abraham. So Paul takes a look at Abraham and what he finds is a man who was saved by grace through faith, a man who was sanctified by grace through faith, long before he ever did anything that might earn him God's favor. Genesis 15:6 declares of Abraham that he simply believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. He was saved by grace through faith apart from any works of righteousness. He was declared righteous fourteen years before he was commanded to be circumcised and more than 500 years before the law was given to Moses!

Galatians 3:7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

The Judaizers taught that for Gentiles to share in the blessings promised to Abraham, they must first become like Abraham and his descendants - by being circumcised and by keeping the law. But Those things came *after* Abraham was already saved by faith! "Go ahead -be like Abraham," was Paul's exhortation; but know that he was saved by way of faith, *not* by works of the flesh.

Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

Galatians 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

The gospel **is** in the Old Testament; it is not a New Testament addition or change. The good news God preached to Abraham was that mankind could be saved by grace through faith. Believe God and He will declare you righteous before Him. All men everywhere, regardless of physical descent, can have the same spiritual descent as Abraham.

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Galatians 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

Using quotes from the Old Testament, Paul bolsters his teaching on the superiority of the way of faith over works of the flesh. If you want to be righteous on the basis of obeying the law, then you must perfectly obey all of the law in every minute point! That puts you under a curse because no one has the power to perfectly obey God's law. Faith or flesh are the only options; and the flesh leaves you cursed.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

Galatians 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The curse of the law was death and eternal separation from God. Jesus Christ's death on the Cross has sufficient power to redeem all lost mankind from the curse of the law! The curse is lifted by faith which God by grace counts as righteousness on your behalf. Rivers of blessing begin to flow into your life as the rushing torrents of God's grace engulf you.

Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

In the minds of the Judaizers, they and the other Jews were Abraham's seed to whom God had made His promises. Paul points out that God's promises were to Abraham and to his one Seed - to Jesus Christ. The promises of God to bless the world come not through the Jews but through Jesus! They are not achieved by works of the flesh; they are received by way of faith.

Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

God made His grace covenant with Abraham almost 500 years before the law was given to Moses. The law does not legally or logically to supersede the blessings of grace.

The inevitable question people ask at this point is: What, then, was and is the purpose of the law? Paul reiterates the question and gives the answer:

Galatians 3:19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

The purpose of the law was and is to show mankind's total sinfulness in the presence of a thrice holy God. The law was "added," it came after the gospel was preached to Abraham, to show the depth of human sinfulness and to establish the universal need for God's mercy and grace in salvation. The law was never intended to make us better by keeping it.

Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

God's law does not contradict God's promise. It gives you a choice. You can either receive a righteous standing before God by simply believing what God says, or you can try to achieve a right standing with God by perfectly keeping every minute point of the law.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

The law points out the bondage human beings are in to their sin nature. It demonstrates your need to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior by grace through faith.

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The law is like a schoolmaster with red pencil in hand, circling your mistakes and failures. Once you receive Jesus, you are done with the schoolmaster! You are "in Christ"; you have "put on Christ." When God the Father looks at you, He doesn't see you in all of your

sin and failure; He sees you in Jesus, robed with His perfect righteousness. Why go back to trying to keep rules and regulations to try to improve your already perfect standing?

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

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Each morning a Jewish man would pray, "I thank you, God, that I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." It was a claim of spiritual superiority because of their fleshly works of righteousness. It is this common prayer Paul is referring to. There is no superiority, there is no inferiority, in the grace of God! All are saved by grace through faith. If you are in Christ, you are not of Moses and the works of the flesh; you are of Abraham and the way of faith.

God never supplied His Spirit to the Jew by works of the flesh. Why, then, should you as a Gentile be compelled to live as a Jew?

Not too many people are urging you to convert to Judaism in order to be saved. But there are many pressures:

There are Sacramentalists....

There are Sabbatarians...

Beloved, the supply of the Spirit cannot and will not come to you by your keeping these or any other external works of the flesh.

Conclusion

The Christian life is not about *performance*; it is about *promise!* The empowering presence of God's Spirit is not a goal to be achieved by your flesh; it is a gift to be received by your faith.

Tap into the rivers of living water by faith!