

10.

GALATIANS 3:1-5

I. REJECT THOSE WHO TEACH YOU A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE

B. Because of Your Own Experiences

Introduction

The second major reason Paul gave the Galatians for rejecting any doctrine except the one he had preached to them was their own experience. He had told them of some of his experiences because those experiences showed his teachings came from God. Now he told them their experiences should teach them the same lesson. Their own experience should have been even more convincing because they had lived it. It should have caused them to reject the false doctrine that was deceiving them without his having to convince them. However, they had been unaware of how the false doctrine they were accepting was totally inconsistent with the experiences they already had had with God.

Paul showed them two ways their experiences should have shown them to avoid the false teachers who were leading them astray. First, they had received the Holy Spirit by faith and not by works. They should have known that, since they began with the Spirit, they also could go forward in growth only by the Spirit, not by the works of the body (Gal 3:2-4). Second, God was supplying the Holy Spirit to them and working miracles among them daily, and He was doing it in response to their faith, not in response to their good deeds. They should have known that, if miracles came by faith and not by keeping the law, true doctrine would come only in the same way (Gal. 3:5). Paul asked them to recognize the logic of their own experience and turn away from those who were deceiving them and making them believe they had to do ritual works to grow in their relationship with God.

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Comments

Verse 1. **O foolish Galatians, who put a spell on you not to obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ crucified was described?**

The second reason Paul gave the Galatians for not abandoning the doctrine of salvation by grace was their own experience. He called them foolish for not recognizing that their own experiences should have protected them from being led astray into believing that their works could add to or complete their salvation. Their salvation had begun by faith; they should understand that it could grow only by faith.

Paul said Christ's crucifixion had been dramatically portrayed to them. Evidently he meant he had given them vivid descriptions of Jesus' crucifixion when he preached to them. How could they believe their works could add anything to what Jesus had done on the Cross? Having learned of Jesus' death for their sins, their decision to accept some other way to grow in their salvation made it seem that someone had put a spell on them.

Probably Paul did not mean he thought the Galatians literally had been bewitched by a practitioner of occult arts but that their actions were so bazaar it was hard to explain them in any other way. Since they had heard about Christ's death to save them, it was incredible that now they should be turning to their own works to complete their salvation. They should understand those works could add nothing to what Jesus did on the Cross.

Paul then mentioned two ways their own experiences should have protected them from accepting the false doctrines that were being taught to them.

Verses 2-3. **2 Only this I desire to learn from you, did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing about faith?**

3 Are you so foolish [that] having begun in the Spirit, you [think you] are being brought to completion by the body?

The first of their experiences Paul mentioned was that they had received salvation by faith, not

works. Paul asked if they had received the Spirit by keeping the works of the law or by hearing about faith in Jesus. They knew they had received the Spirit through faith in Jesus, so he asked them why they should believe they could go further and complete their salvation by works they could perform with their bodies.

When Paul spoke of their "being brought to completion," he implied that the deceivers were telling them that what Paul had taught them was good but not enough. They needed to add the works of the law so their salvation could be complete. Then they would be fully saved. Paul said they should have been able to recognize that salvation cannot begin in one way and be completed in another. If their salvation had begun through faith, it could grow and be completed only by faith. They began in Jesus by faith. They could go on to maturity in Christ through faith alone, not through practicing rituals and ceremonies.

4 Have you suffered so much for nothing, if indeed [it was] for nothing?

Paul said it was incredible that the Galatians had endured so much opposition to their faith in the Gospel only to desert what they had received by faith in order to accept something that could not save them. Doing so, did not make any sense. Paul did not describe the opposition and sufferings they had endured, but the Book of Acts tells of bitter opposition and physical attacks that Paul suffered when he ministered in Galatia (Acts 13:44-51; 14:1-7, 19-20). When Paul was in Galatia and his life was endangered, he moved on to other cities; but the Galatians lived there and could not flee. We can imagine what trials they must have suffered as opposition to their faith continued day after day. However, those who believed had endured and had remained faithful to what Paul had taught them. He thought it was incredible that, after enduring all that suffering, they now could desert the truth for which they had suffered so much, because some false teachers were enticing them with deceptive words.

Paul emphasized the seriousness of their mistake by asking them if they had really suffered so much for nothing. He meant that, if they truly accepted that it was necessary to keep the Mosaic

law for their salvation to be complete, it would negate the faith they had claimed to have and caused them to suffer persecution for no reason. Then he hastened to day, “**if indeed [it was] for nothing.**” He still held open the probability that they would accept his warnings and turn away from the false teachings that were being taught to them. If they would turn back to full acceptance of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone, it would show their faith was real and they had not suffered in vain.

Verse 5. **So, the One who supplies the Spirit to you and who works miracles among you, [does He do it] by works of law or by hearing about faith?**

The second of their experiences Paul mentioned was that miracles were being worked among them continually because of their faith, not because of keeping the law. Paul knew that, when He spoke of “One who supplies the Spirit to you and who works miracles among you,” the Galatians would understand that One was God. They had begun to experience miracles worked by the Holy Spirit after they had accepted Jesus by faith and before they ever heard they needed to practice the deeds of the law. Obviously then, the Holy Spirit’s

miracles were coming to them in response to their faith and not through keeping the law.

We would like to know what miracles Paul was referring to, but Paul did not need to explain them to the Galatians. They knew what wonderful works God was doing for them. So, Paul asked them what means God was using to supply the Holy Spirit to them and to work miracles among them. Was it through the works of the law or through what they had heard about faith? He knew they would recognize it was happening because of their faith. How then could they not recognize that, if God was working miracles among them through the Holy Spirit, that that same Holy Spirit was all they needed to grow in their faith? Why then should they be so foolish as to let themselves be led astray into believing that God would add additional blessings to them only if they practiced the rituals of the law?

Paul insisted that if they would just check their own daily experience with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they would know better than to be deceived into accepting a doctrine that taught that works of any kind were necessary to complete their salvation.