



SERIES: We Are Free December 2022-January 2023

SPEAKER: TOM REMPEL

Tuesday, December 27, 2022

Scripture: Galatians 3:3-6

TITLE: The Game Changer for Spiritual Living

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:6

Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.

Proverbs 28:23

The apostolic pen drips with frustration. “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ...” And then, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” Grace versus Works as contrasted in the “Hearing with Faith” to “The works of the Law” has been his theme. So Paul continues his passionate pastoral appeal...

Are you so foolish [unthinking, undiscerning, lacking perception]? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by the works of the law, or by the hearing with faith—just as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?

Galatians 3:3-6

He opened his argument for Faith over Works salvation with a pair of rhetorical and penetrating questions: “Who has bewitched you?” and “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?” And now, in rapid fire fashion, Paul poses four more questions, which, if logically answered, will affirm his proposition that salvation and all its ongoing benefits are received and enjoyed, not by meritorious devotion to the demands of the law but rather by the simple hearing in faith.

- “Are you so foolish?”
- “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
- “Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it WAS in vain?”
- “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...?”

“...just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Paul picks up two themes from the previous two verses. The matter of the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives and the reproof for their spiritual laziness thus leading to failure to be discerning.

Question #3: “Are you so foolish?” picks up his stern indictment from verse 1 of our chapter. “O foolish Galatians!” The clearly declared and described necessary substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the theological foundation for a salvation that is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. Changing from simply trusting in Christ’s finished work to resting their confidence in their own work was to declare that Christ suffered, bled and died for no purpose at all. Think about the implications of what you are now doing! “Are you so foolish?”

Question #4: “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” In gracious manner the apostle here affirms his confidence that their initial response of faith in the Gospel preached was authentic. So he does not directly question their regeneration and justification, but rather shifts his focus to their sanctification.

You see, biblical salvation involves three essential parts. There is the faith in Christ that regenerates. The biblical term is “justification.” The record of offenses against the holiness of God and His perfect law is erased by simply trusting in Jesus. But the second aspect of our salvation is Paul’s point of address here. That is “Sanctification.” This is the ongoing daily process of becoming more and more like Christ Jesus in our character and behavior. So he asks, are you making the radical changes in what you are by depending on the strength of your flesh which has time and again been proven impotent against sin or is it the active working of the indwelling Holy Spirit that is producing victory over temptation?

Question #5: “Did you suffer many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?” Here the writer subtly suggests that they take a serious look at the authenticity of their previous profession. You said you believed. The cost of such commitment had been high. Many lost family, possessions and some even their health. If being “good” could have saved their lost souls, why pay such a price?

Question #6: “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?” Again the apostle affirms his confidence in the reality of their salvation by pointing out the experiences that validate the Holy Spirit’s presence in them and among them. As Paul wrote to the Romans,

[His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God!](#)
Romans 8:16

Whatever other evidences they had witnessed of the Holy Spirit come into them, the initial assurance of soul confirmed the authenticity of their faith alone saving. And apparently some of the miracles that accompanied Paul and Barnabas’ initial ministry among them had continued to be seen. Because the power for those was not in the messengers of the Good News but in the presence of the Spirit. Again Paul argues that if they were thinking with clarity and discernment, they would quickly conclude that the law could never do the work that only the Spirit can accomplish.

Then Paul reminds them that over 400 years before Moses and his ministry of delivering the written law to God’s people, a salvation by faith alone had already been established. Here he references Genesis 15 and the day that Abraham came face to face with the human impossibility

of fulfilling the promise of God. As he rapidly neared his 100th birthday and now 25 years after first embracing the promise of God, when God restated His plan that an entire nation of people were to come from the loins of Abraham himself, the aging saints simply believed. And by that singular act was removed all the failures and offenses he had committed against God's holy character. On that day God legally declared Abraham to be righteous!

John R.W. Stott rightly stated, "The Holy Spirit is not our goal but our source." The game-changer in spiritual living is the indwelling presence and unleashed power of the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Paul reasons that their having heard the account of Christ's death for their sins coupled with their own experiences on their spiritual journey should have been sufficient insight to lead them to rejecting the teachers of the legalists.

Christ's death for you and for me is an established fact. His life becomes our life simply by faith in Him. And that same faith that gave us His life is the faith that will daily make us less like ourselves and more like Jesus!

The Law makes demands and bids us to obey. The Gospel makes promises and bids us to believe.