

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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LET'S TALK ABOUT THE SPIRIT

Galatians 3:1-17

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In today's sermon, I am asking three questions:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What part does he play in salvation?
- What is faith?

INTRODUCTION: For the next few weeks, we are reading through the book of Galatians and studying the message Paul wrote to the churches there. His teachings are just as applicable to us today as they were then.

- The churches in Galatia were made up primarily of Gentile believers, but false teachers had infiltrated the ranks and were trying to convince these new Christians they had to follow Jewish laws in order to be truly saved.
- In chapter one, Paul reminded the churches that salvation is based on the work Christ completed on the cross and is not a result of anything we can do. He called the false teaching a perversion of the gospel and warned against the dangers of perverting the truth of God's word.
- In chapter two, Paul gave a personal testimony emphasizing why he was authorized to preach the Gospel. He expounded upon the freedom that comes from faith in Christ, the diversity of ministries and people within the church, the importance of integrity, and the meaning of justification.

There are several reasons why some Bible teachers believe false teaching had crept into the church. Those teaching the falsehoods were Jews who wanted others to accommodate the religion they had grown up with. They wanted people without their background to comply with what they thought the others needed to do and to know.

The false teachers also wanted approval. The Roman government had been lenient with the Jews, and it strictly forbade any new religious groups.

Another reason the false teaching had become popular is because the Gentiles were listening to the wrong authority. That's why Paul wrote that the authority by which he taught was not his own.

Accommodation, Approval, Authority – these were the primary reasons that false teachings had crept into the Gospel. These same reasons are why false gospels are taught today.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 3:1-5

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ² I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? ⁴ Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? ⁵ So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

EXPLANATION: Paul was using every means possible to help the Galatians understand the fallacy of what they were hearing. He had already given them his personal testimony. Now, he reminded them of theirs.

The term translated here as “portrayed” could be literally translated as placarded. In other words, Paul was saying, “Look, when you came to salvation this issue was as clear as if Jesus’s crucifixion was on a billboard right in front of your face!” What had once been obvious to them was now being questioned. We can sense Paul’s frustration.

Paul called upon the church to think about the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 18 times in Galatians. So, before we go any further into this epistle, I think it’s important that we answer a few more questions.

1-WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

EXPLANATION: The Holy Spirit is the third part of the Trinity. Remember, the Trinity is how we refer to a triune God, one God made up of three parts: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit was present at creation. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”* Genesis 1:1-2

The Spirit was with God-followers in the Old Testament. Pharaoh recognized the Spirit of God in Joseph. God said that he had given a craftsman named Bezalel the Spirit. The Spirit was with Gideon and, for a while, Samson.

In Luke 1:35, *“The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

Later, when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, her unborn son, John, leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

But, while the Spirit has played a role in the life of humanity since the beginning, it was not until after Christ ascended into heaven that the Spirit came to permanently dwell in the hearts of believers.

In John 14:16-17, Jesus spoke of the Spirit when he told his disciples, *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

In Acts 2, we read about how the Spirit descended on the apostles and the power given to them.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4)

2-WHAT PART DOES THE SPIRIT PLAY IN SALVATION?

EXPLANATION: Paul reminded the Galatians and us that the Spirit is essential to salvation. In John 4, Jesus said that no one can come to him unless the Father draws them. In John 16:7-11, Jesus spoke about the time when he would return to Heaven.

He said, *“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”*⁸ *When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

In other words, it is the Spirit who reveals Christ to humans and who convicts them of their sins and their need for a Savior. When that happens, a person has the choice to either yield to the Spirit’s conviction or resist it – and I do believe the Spirit of God can be resisted. If a person admits his own sinfulness and need for a Savior, believes that Jesus is the Son of God who has paid the price for his sins, and receives Christ’s forgiveness, the person is then born of the Spirit.

This is what Christ spoke of when he talked to Nicodemus. *“Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”* (John 3:5-6)

As a result of that spiritual birth, the person becomes a part of the body of Christ and is guaranteed to share in the glory of Christ.

Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”*

The point Paul was trying to make was this: If it all starts and ends with the Spirit, then how could salvation be dependent on circumcision or the law or anything else? Obviously, it could not. Salvation is by faith. Let's continue reading.

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 3:6-17

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”¹¹ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”¹² The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.”¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.¹⁵ Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,-meaning one person, who is Christ.¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

EXPLANATION: In addition to his testimony and their testimony, Paul also gave the Galatians a short history lesson. Abraham was the patriarch of the Israelites. He was chosen by God to be the father of the nation by which Christ would come into this earth. God's promise to bless the whole world through Abraham's family came hundreds of years before God gave the law to Moses. Because many of these people were probably Gentiles, they may have never considered that point. The promise of a Savior—which was given to Abraham by faith—came well before the law—which was given to Moses. Next week, we will discuss the purpose of the law, but right now, I want us to consider the matter of faith.

3-WHAT IS FAITH?

EXPLANATION: Faith is the “complete confidence or trust in someone or something.” We have faith that when we sit in a chair, the chair will hold us. We have faith that our employer will deposit our checks into our accounts after we have worked all week.

If we look at the Greek word for faith, *pistis* (pis'-tis), we discover that Biblical faith is somewhat different. Biblical faith is always a gift from God and never something we can produce.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*”

Biblehub, a reputable website that many students of the Bible use, calls faith “God’s divine persuasion.” The Spirit births this faith in the heart of the believer, and it is the Spirit that sustains it.

This is where some believers today get off track. Sometimes we tend to think of our faith as something we do, but in reality, it is something that the Holy Spirit does in us. Yes, we have free will. There are plenty of scriptures that indicate this. We have the choice to either yield to the Holy Spirit’s call and work within us or to resist it, but the work is always done by God. It was God the Father who sent the Son. It was the Son who gave his life to pay the price for our sins, and it is the Spirit who convicts, calls, and keeps us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*”

This was the lesson that Paul was trying to get the Galatians to understand. They could do nothing to add to the Gospel. Neither can we.

INVITATION: 2 Peter 3:9 says, “*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*”

God gives each and every person an opportunity to be saved. Do you feel the Holy Spirit working in your heart? Have you yielded to him, receiving the gift of faith and salvation, or are you resisting? God loves you, and he wants you to know and love him. Do not put it off. The altar is open if you want to come and pray.

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