

Series: Galatians

Title: Hearing of Works or Faith?

Text: Galatians 3: 1-6

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Galatians 3: 1: O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Paul is using words that refer to *the eye* for a specific reason. He uses the word “*bewitched*”: the Gentiles called it “the evil eye”, referring to how a snake charms its prey. The snake used its eye to put its prey into a trance.

Truly, it was the “old serpent”, the devil, through his law-mongering preachers who had bewitched the Galatians by turning their eye from Christ to the law to their own works. It was so offensive and hurtful to Paul because he says before your “*eyes Jesus Christ has been “evidently”—clearly—“set forth; crucified among you”*”.

Christ is the Light and the Truth we obey

John 14:6: Jesus saith...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 1:7 [It said of John the Baptist] The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

To obey the truth is to submit to Christ in faith for all—Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. The obedience of faith is having the eye of faith set on Christ, submitting to Christ from the heart for all salvation. Walking by faith is to be taught by Christ so as to walk after Christ. Faith is given and sustained in us through the preaching of his person and works—that which Paul refers to as “the hearing of faith.” With a single eye to Christ, his Light fills us with light; he sanctifies us as well as makes us righteous. Christ said,

Luke 11: 33: No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth *it* in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

Christ’s church is the candlestick and Christ is the Light we preach “evidently”—clearly, plainly, all the time. Through hearing of Christ’s faithfulness we have our eye single upon Christ the Light.

Luke 11: 34: The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, [for Christ alone] thy whole body also is full of light [Christ sanctifies: he fills with his light]; but when *thine eye* is evil [bewitched: turned from Christ to works of the law by our sinful flesh], thy body also *is* full of darkness. 35: Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36: If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

So the bewitching in Galatia—turning from Christ to something else—was Paul’s greatest fear.

2 Corinthians 11: 2: For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. 3: But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

“Simplicity” in Christ is having the eye of faith set on Christ alone. It is resting in Christ in singleness of heart. Brethren, if what we hear—from the pulpit or whispered in private—turns us to Christ from sinful flesh, if it turns us from trusting our works to rest in Christ, if it turns us from tearing down with the letter of the law to building up with the gospel of Christ then it is the simplicity that is in Christ. But if it does the opposite then it is the bewitching of the devil.

Proposition: Christ is the Salvation of his people: obedience is believing on Christ alone through God-given faith; it is learning from Christ alone; it is following Christ alone through the hearing of his faithfulness. Paul will illustrate this with a few questions.

HOW DID WE BEGIN?

Galatians 3: 2: This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

To “*receive the Spirit of God*” is to be freely given the Spirit of God. “*The works of the law*” refers to works done by the sinner. “*The hearing of faith*” refers to the gospel of Christ who saved his people by Christ’s faithfulness—it is hearing of Christ’s faithfulness.

We were dead in sins. If we be born of God then were we regenerated by the Holy Spirit “*by the works of the law?*” Was it by something we did? Or did the Spirit regenerate us through “*the hearing of faith?*”—the hearing of Christ’s person and works?

The “*hearing of faith*” is the hearing of Christ’s faithfulness. God the Father chose his Son and sent him to make his people righteous and holy. Christ made his people righteous by his blood on the cross. Christ is Head of the church. He fills all in all his people. So he sends the preaching of the gospel and sanctifies us inwardly through the Spirit through the “*hearing of faith.*” It pleased God to save through the gospel which declares Christ as the only our Righteousness and Holiness of his people. Christ said,

John 17: 19: For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Christ is the Truth we hear preached. He sanctified himself as the only one who is holy and separate from sinners. He did so that he might be fit to give himself to bear the sin and curse of God’s elect on the cross. Therefore, Christ is the truth we preach. We preach how that Christ made us the righteousness of God in him, put away our sin, justified us, established the law on our behalf and so Christ is our Righteousness. He finished the work from a holy, pure heart so that Christ is our Holiness. He redeemed us from the law that we might live unto God so that Christ is our Redemption. So Christ is the Truth his ministers preach. Then through the hearing of his faithfulness, Christ sends the Holy Spirit regenerating and sanctifying his people, giving us faith to obey the Truth! He “casts down our imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor 10: 5)

The Spirit gives us the mind of Christ. He makes Christ our Wisdom so that we behold salvation is not by our obedience to the law but by the obedience of Christ himself, apart from our works. He makes us believe as did the apostle Paul,

Galatians 2:16: Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith OF Jesus Christ, even we have believed IN Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith OF Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Christ speaks into our hearts, *saying*, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Jn 6: 29). And for the first time our one desire is to “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith OF Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Php 3: 9).

HOW DO WE GROW?

Galatians 3: 3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

The word “perfect” means mature. It does not mean sinless perfection.

The Judaizers were not denying justification by Christ through faith in him. They were telling believers they must live under the law to be made perfect by their works. That is what is being preached by many in our day. Most teach that sanctification (holiness) is living under the law. In some form or another they make sanctification a co-effort between the sinner and Christ. But to be made holy and to grow in that state

of holiness has nothing to do with our works. It is to be given a pure heart by God. Holiness is to be grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Christ is the Sanctification of his people. Christ formed in his people is the Holiness of the new man. Growth in grace is by Christ growing us in more knowledge of how he is our All! But most teach that sanctification is growing more and more holy and less and less sinful by your works until you are ripe for heaven. As a proof text they use:

Mark 4:28: For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

But corn seed makes corn. Like begets like. From the seed as a corn plant grows it does not become more of a corn plant whether in the blade, the ear or the full ear. It merely grows as a corn plant. We do not become more holy. Christ is our Holiness. By Christ, the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1: 12-13). When God the Father has done so the sinner is holy. He is sanctified. He is fit for heaven. If that were not true then we could have no communion in prayer with Holy God. Christ said that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Holy Spirit is holy spirit. The apostle Peter shows us this purifying work is by Christ, by the incorruptible Seed (the Word), by regenerating and sanctifying us through the preaching of the gospel.

1 Peter 1: 21: Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 22: Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. 2: 1: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Being born of incorruptible Seed by the Word there a new man created within a sinner which is holy and incorruptible. As we grow from a new born baby, though our flesh from Adam is only sin and dying daily, in that new inward man which is of God we are incorruptible by the incorruptible Seed and are being renewed daily by God. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

1 John 3:9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

2 Corinthians 4: 16: For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

None of this is of us. The old man is of our father Adam and is still sin. But the new man is of God and is righteous and holy after Christ's image that created him.

Ephesians 4: 22: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; [after Adam] 23: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 3: 10:...the new man,...is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11: [and in that new man]...Christ is all, and in all.

Brethren, our sinful flesh is sinful flesh. The apostle Paul qualified his statement declaring he was speaking of his sinful flesh which is of Adam when he wrote "in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth not good thing" (Rom 7:18). A born-again believer has a new holy man created of God. But our sin-nature is withering grass. It must return to the dust. So we are not getting more holy and less sinful. Christ is the Holiness of the new man, the same as he is our Righteousness. We begin in the Spirit by Christ being formed in us through hearing of Christ and we grow the same way.

But how do we grow? Christ grows us in grace and knowledge of him. He gave us faith as the gift of God's grace. And Christ grows us in faith. He does it, not by hearing of works, but by growing us in the

knowledge of him. We are continually hearing of Christ's person and works. Christ is our Bread fed to us through the hearing of the gospel. We grow in faith hearing that we are complete in Christ (Col 2: 10), hearing that as he is so are we in this world (1 Jn 4:17), hearing that our Life is at God's right hand (Col 3: 3), hearing that we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1: 6).

As we hear of Christ's faithfulness, Christ also grows us in grace. He grows us to love one another—not by the hearing of works—but by showing us more of how Christ loved us. He said,

John 13:34: A new commandment I give to you that you love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, that ye also love one another.

Eph 5:2: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

1 John 4: 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so [after this manner] loved us, we ought also to love one another [after this manner]. 12: No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected [grown] in us. 13: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Christ grows us in grace to esteem our brethren better than ourselves, to look on the needs of our brethren. He does so by growing us in knowledge of how Christ made himself of no reputation but took on him the form of a servant for us (Php 2: 1-8).

Philippians 2: 1: If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2: Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. 3: *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4: Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Our Lord grows us the grace of forgiveness, not by hearing the works of the law, but by growing us in the knowledge of how God has forgiven us for the sake of Christ. He grows us in forgiveness by teaching us how Christ forgave us. He grows us in

Colossians 3: 13: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

He grows us to be cheerful givers by growing us in knowledge of his free, bountiful grace to us

2 Corinthians 8:9: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

But as we grow in grace and knowledge of Christ, we are already holy. We grow in grace by growing in the knowledge of Christ but we do so in the state of holiness. Therefore, Christ is our fitness for heaven right now. The sanctified thief on the cross was as holy, being sanctified just a little while before leaving this life with his hand and feet nailed to the cross, as is as the oldest believer to ever live.

THE ANSWER

Galatians 3: 5: He [Christ who filleth all in all] that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you [miracles such as: regeneration, faith, love, growth in grace and knowledge of him], doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 6: Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the

heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Our LORD could not preach law (the hearing of works) to Abraham because the law was not given for 430 years. Abraham was saved through the hearing of faith—the hearing of Christ’s person and works. Every elect child is saved through the hearing of faith, the gospel of Christ. So Abraham walked, not by law, but by faith. He was grown in grace hearing how Christ would bless his elect in every nation. “*So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*” We are called in the first hour through the hearing of Christ’s person and works (the hearing of faith). We are grown in grace and knowledge of Christ through the hearing of Christ’s person and works (the hearing of faith). That is why we are determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor 2: 2).

Amen!