

LSB Galatians 3:1 -

O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing? 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Last week we reveled in Paul's logical argument of his gospel versus a different gospel that some troublesome judaizers from Jerusalem have brought.

OK, I reveled. I can't speak for y'all. But if you take pleasure in brilliant logic in combination with human vessels waging spiritual warfare against Satanic thinking, then it causes joy to watch the best there ever was slicing and dicing Satan's duped warriors to pieces.

We marvel and yes, even revel when we watch God use human instruments to do His warfare. That's exciting. And God doesn't need us. He can use a Donkey if there's no godly human available like when the donkey spoke to Baalam.

Our hearts sing with excitement any time God goes to war against evil. And when we are ready and useable and He graciously allows us to join with Him in the warfare and be used to slice and dice satan like Paul was here against the Judaizers, there's perhaps no more exciting spectacle on earth.

You know, building an alter like Elijah did with the false prophets and then watching as they cut themselves and dance and plead for fire, and then soaking your alter's wood with water and then watching God respond with fire out of heaven, would be fun, but if both of those methods, were

available to me, having God speak His word through me with unasailable logic backed by His power, or fire from heaven, I think I'd choose the Words.

The fire out of heaven was a one time event and not only was no one changed by it, but Elijah had kind of a mental depression breakdown afterwards in his disappointment that nothing came of it except a death threat on his life.

Fire from heaven convinced no one, but words out of God's mouth caused the universes to be. They weren't and because of His words, they were. And we watch in awe as Paul uses words to decimate these judaizers and their lofty false gospel sent as messengers of Satan. This is exciting stuff.

Listen to what Paul tells the christians at Corinth about using God's words as offense against an enemy who is smarter than us;

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds, 5 as we tear down speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10:3 - 5

Paul is in a war and he's showing us his strategy to win. His logic in a nutshell. Their gospel is only fleshy, only human. Our gospel engaged the Holy Spirit and literally caused you to be born again and transferred out of the kingdoms of this world, the kingsoms of the god of this world, satan, into the kingdom of God.

Last week we took some time to catalog all that the Spirit of God did in the sequence of salvation. Regeneration from spiritual death in sin, to spiritual life in Christ. And just by way of quick reminder, we said that in salvation, the Holy Spirit causes all of it by grace.

He quickens our dead spirits alive so that we can be drawn to Christ. Then

He convicts us of our sins, and grants to us the very repentance necessary. Then it is the Spirit who gives us the necessary faith to believe as a gift. Then when we receive Jesus the Spirit comes and dwells in us. We are alive together with Christ. Christ in you. You in Christ. A holy communion.

All of that happens in a blink of an eye as Christ quickens you from death to life. We think we did it, made some choice, prayed some prayer, but after 53 years of reflection, I have understood that it was all complete the moment the Spirit woke me from my death slumber and caused my heart to believe.

So Paul calls to remembrance of these true believers who have actually realized life inside them when the Spirit came and called them out of this world. And in this first beginning argument Paul calls on them to remember their experience.

O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

That's where we stopped last week. But I wasn't at all finished with verse 3. Look again with me at verse 3 as Paul argues using their experience in the Spirit as a proof.

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

That verse has two distinct parts. A beginning by the Spirit. That's what we looked at last week. But then Paul says; *are you now **being perfected by the flesh?***

That's a rhetorical question of course. The Spirit caused new life. Called

you out of this world and is the downpayment for future wealth that our little brains can't even really begin to fathom. Locked in place, in heaven, protected, with our names on it, at salvation when we received the Spirit who is a pledge, like an engagement ring that guarantees all things yet future.

That's done. Locked down in place. Positional truth that we accept by faith. We have our engagement ring, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and we are waiting for the day when we will see His face. Right?

But then Paul says; *are you now **being perfected** by the flesh?* Wait! What does that mean? You mean, after salvation, there's more? Now? We don't just get saved and then wait? We're supposed to be experiencing something more now, before we see His face? Whoa! What a thought.

Because as you look around at christianity, this is a foreign thought. I got my fire insurance policy and I put it in my lock box, and that's it. Right? What is Paul talking about, being perfected?

Paul uses that word as if it's the logical next step. **being perfected**. And his point is, this is obviously something you're engaged in doing, but his argument is, it won't happen on a human level without the Spirit.

On one level, for them, that's exactly what they had bought into. The Spirit quickened us from death to life and does miracles in our midst, but we're going to jettison the Spirit and take a deep dive into Moses. Absurd.

So Paul's logic is, you began with the Spirit, now you're going to shelve Him and do the rest yourselves, in your flesh. That's insanity. Because everything that is needful, after salvation, is spiritual work. Your flesh can't accomplish anything. The perfection Paul mentions, is spirit work. So to set the Spirit aside and try to be perfected by the law of Moses was pure folly. And that's Paul's point.

But let's pause for a moment and talk about this thing that Paul called being

perfected. What is that? What happens after salvation? What more is there? What is this perfection phase that the galatians seemed to know about, even if they had abandoned the right approach and embraced a faulty one?

Well, whatever it is, according to Paul's rhetorical statement of fact, it isn't going to happen by the flesh. The old me. So what is possible for me, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit who dwells in me?

In 1954 Robert B Munger wrote a sermon that became a popular little pamphlet kind of a book called *My Heart: Christ's Home*. It was still popular when I was a new christian and it's a clever little read that you can do in 20 minutes or less, and I encourage you to do so. (back bench)

In it he allegorizes his relationship with Jesus and how after Jesus moved into his heart, he begins a life long process of re-arranging, cleaning, organizing, and so on. Not perfect but very easy to read and understand and an excellent place for new christians to begin.

What we're speaking about here in what Paul rather flippantly called being perfected, as if, of course we're all well versed in this area, is what christians have referred to as sanctification. Sanctification.

Oops. That's a 5 syllable word and those are frowned upon in our world, so let me tell you quickly what that means. Sanctification is the process, in our lives, after Christ comes into our hearts, where He over time, changes us into His likeness.

It is a transformation that occurs slowly, more slowly for me I suppose than most, but a transformation of the old me into a new me that looks like Christ. *18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.* 2 Cor. 3:18

The mirror is the Word of God. And as we gaze into that mirror, every day,

every day, every day, we are being transformed into the glory of Christ. Little by little by little. In my case, infinitesimal steps forward it seems to my impatient heart.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul says; *23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That verse gives me 3 categories of change that will be complete at Christ's coming. Complete when I see His face for the first time. Complete at the rapture, whether I've been dead for a thousand years, or whether I see Him in the air next week.

My body and soul and spirit will be sanctified complete. Can't wait. But what about now, for those of us that God continues to grant breath. What about the sanctifying process after salvation and before the rapture, in this life. Paul says are you now being perfected? What? How?

Paul's trichotomy is useful. Body, Soul, Spirit. Although many theologians would hyphenate soul spirit. For my brain its helpful to leave them seperate. Here's how I see this process.

My body. It's hopeless. It's rotting in place. Daily it moves closer to it's final state of ultimate decay. But for now, decrepit as it is, it is housing for my soul and spirit. Here's my idea on those.

I think my soul-spirit is the intelligent being that lives inside the decaying body, and that soul will live forever . . . eternally . . . somewhere after this body gives up the fight and dies. Heaven with God, or Hell in blackness of darkness in agony without God.

But I would dichotomize further for ease of possible understanding. My spirit was made to enjoy fellowship with God, but it was separated, dead because of sin. Removed from God's presence. Dead in it's capacity to enjoy God. To know God intimately.

But when Jesus quickened my dead spirit to life, my sins were carried away, and my resurrected spirit began an intimate friendship with the Lord Jesus, and the Father above, by His indwelling Holy Spirit. Once dead, quickened to life. Complete. Not only complete, but the pledge of future glory that is waiting in heaven for me to inherit fully.

Body, still dying, soon to be dead. Spirit alive with Christ. What about my soul. The old me that's also the new me. I find that my soul is the part of me that can be changed little by little into the likeness of Christ.

A lot of the old dead sinful prideful horrible me is still present after I became a christian. New life, but then I found, dreadfully slow advancement into Christlikeness. Sanctification of my troubled once sinful soul is a life long battle at an annoyingly slow process.

Paul, in our verse in Galatians 3, calls that long process; being perfected. *Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 3b* What a fools errand. This dying rotting flesh is going to perfect my soul? Utter foolishness, but they had fallen for the nonsense.

We know because of the rhetorical nature of Paul's logic that becoming perfect will not be brought about by our flesh. What then. The Holy Spirit who lives in us, will little by little, as we look into the mirror of His word, will cause that perfecting in us. It's Spirit work, not flesh work. God's Spirit in us working on our souls bit by bit, piece by piece, here a little, there a little . .

Isa. 28:

9 *“Whom would He instruct in knowledge,
And whom would He provide understanding about the report?
Those just weaned from milk?
Those just taken from the breast?*
10 *For He says,
‘Order on order, order on order,*

*Line on line, line on line,
A little here, a little there.”*

*11 Indeed, He will speak to this people
Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,
12 He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,”
And, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.*

*13 So the word of Yahweh to them will be,
“Order on order, order on order,
Line on line, line on line,
A little here, a little there,”
That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken
captive.*

We go to God's word humbly, with the Spirit helping us, and we spend time looking into it, little by little, line upon line, and unlike the Israelites who dis-obeyed and were broken, snared, and captured, we, with the Spirit are changed more into Jesus, little by little. Here a little, there a little. Israel forfeited the rest and repose for their weary souls. We seek that rest and repose, little by little as Jesus changes us from the inside out through His word.

It's why Jesus, when he called Peter back to himself, after his great failure, after he is restored, Jesus says 3 times to him, feed my sheep, feed my lambs, feed my sheep.

We need to be immersed in God's word all the time, in order for the Spirit to transform our humble sinful estate into His glorious estate. It's a lifelong project, and it makes me sad that most christians don't have clue one.

Last week we catalogued all of what the Holy Spirit does for us and in us at the beginning of our salvation experience. This morning, before we move on, I want to quickly look at all that the Holy Spirit does for us in our life long sanctification process, before we see Jesus in the air and are in the blinking of an eye, completed, made perfect.

The first thing the Holy Spirit does in our life long sanctification growing process is simply the encouragement of fellowship. Knowing God. Communing intimately with God. How intimately?

In Gethsemane, Jesus, sweating great drops of blood, as He was facing the weight of all of our sins, In Mark 14:36 *And He was saying, "Abba! Father!"*

In Romans 8 we learn that we have that same intimacy with our Father. We have that same access level to the Father as Jesus had in the garden. Paul says; *14 For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,* Ro. 8:14 - 16

Not only that, but in Galatians 4 which we'll look at in a few weeks, there is a parallel passage with a slight twist;

6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." Gal. 4:6

In the Romans 8 passage, we cry out. IN the Galatians 4 passage, the Holy Spirit inside our hearts cries out for us, Abba Father. Papa! It's seamlessly interchangeable when the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

That sweet fellowship is also what drives sanctification. I've been married to Pam for 48 years. We fight. Once in a while. But neither of us likes to be mad at the other for long. We enjoy being friends. So the fights are rare and they don't last very long.

Our fellowship with Jesus is very similar to a long marriage. It's no fun being at odds. So much more pleasant being in close communion.

In Robert Munger's little book that I mentioned, one day he comes home and Jesus says, something stinks upstairs. Something's dead up there. And

it's coming from a little closet that's locked up. Secret sin. And the christian says, come on, I gave you all the other rooms to fix how you want, can't I just have one closet, and Jesus says, well I'm not going to stick around in this stench and starts down stairs. And the christian thinks about how lonely it is when He's not with him, and says, here's the key to the closet. You can have it too.

The communion with Jesus, the Abba Father, the fellowship of the indwelling Spirit is what keeps us in the long haul. It's too horrible and lonely when He leaves. Easier to obey and have His friendship with me.

The indwelling Holy Spirit gives me a hunger to be with Christ. Peter says to the new believers; *1 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good....* 1 Peter 2:2

That craving, that longing for God's word is a product of the indwelling Christ, calling us to grow, like natural babies long for milk. I question all the so called christians in town who have no hunger. How is that possible? If the Holy Spirit dwells in you, where is the hunger for His Word and fellowship?

The next thing the Holy Spirit does in the long perfection process is to open the scriptures to us. He illumines the scriptures to us. He makes the Word come alive. Why not? He is the logos. He is the Word. John 14:25,26

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John the apostle repeats this in 1 John 2:27. And the occasion in the apostles letter is the same as Paul's in Galatia. False teachers trying to deceive. The answer is the indwelling Holy Spirit;

26 These things I have written to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 And as for you, the anointing whom you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as He has taught you, abide in Him.

We abide in Him by living in the book, and as we do that, the Holy Spirit teaches us and leads us into truth about all things. The anointing John speaks of is synonymous with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

He fellowships, He encourages, He teaches, He draws us, He leads us. And it's never about Him the Spirit. The Spirit glorifies Jesus.

13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. Jn. 16:13,14

The Holy Spirit doesn't glorify the Holy Spirit. The Spirit directs our attention to the glory of Jesus.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: John 15:26

He will glorify Me, he shall testify of me The indwelling Spirit always always shines the light on Jesus. That's why I'm so wary of pentacostals and charismatics that only have interest in the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is really present, he directs all of your interest to Jesus, not Himself.

Finally in this long, or sometimes short, interim where our spirits are on the road to Christlikeness, the Spirit guides us. We are continually being kept filled with the Holy Spirit. Christian breathing. Filled, walk, sin, fall, confess, restore, filled, walk, repeat. It's a walk. Like John Bunyan's allegory. We walk together with Christ as our guide.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Gal. 5:16

Time with Him changes us. Little by little. I'm not sinless, but over the long haul, I sin less, and less, and hopefully, less. We are on a journey with Jesus and He changes our spirits into His likeness as we continue on that journey. He leads us into all truth.

When I was a young new christian I used to worry and say how will I know where He wants me to go, what He wants me to do. My (sometimes) wise Mom used to say, You can't steer a bus that's not moving. MacArthur's paraphrase along the same lines is, "filled with the Spirit, do what you want."

In other words, if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, walking in communion with Christ, do what you want, because with His indwelling influence, you'll want to do what He desires. He can steer this bus. Here I am in Tonopah Nevada preaching to __ people. Right? He doesn't trust me to 40. I don't blame Him.

OK, that's a helpful side bar into sanctification which is what Paul is arguing from. You began in the Spirit but you're going to finish without Him?? That's idiotic. Absurd.

4 Did you suffer so many things for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing?

If they continue on the dead end road the judaizers have directed them onto, everything they've suffered so far, is for naught. Paul isn't quite ready to let them go. *if indeed it was for nothing?* That seems hopeful. Not quite ready to give up on you yet. There's still hope of getting this train back on the track.

What is he referring to. What had they suffered? We can read between the lines here. The world that the church was born into was not a welcoming

place.

You're Satan, waging war on God, holding onto this planet for all you're worth, trying to hold ground you've occupied, and the Holy Spirit comes along and sweeps a few hundred people in Galatia out of your control and into God's armies. Do you leave them alone?

Well, I suppose on one level, you do if God tells you to. Not a hair will be harmed. But we find in God's providence that God allows and ordains various trials and challenges and troubles that He then uses for our good and His glory.

I'm sure that was far more so for them than what we've experienced in our land so far. My big fear is that trouble will come and we won't know how to face it because we've had ease for so long in this land.

You can go and read in the book of Acts all that these folks suffered from the jews as they came to Christ. Everywhere Paul went and planted new churches there was a resulting uproar and persecution.

It wouldn't be much different there than what christians face now in Moslem countries. It was costly to become a christian. But having Jesus is worth more than anything this world can offer. Paul says, was that all in vain?

You lost everything in this world in order to embrace Jesus, and now you're going to set Him aside and actually sort of try to appease the world by embracing Moses and the law instead of Jesus. That's crazy.

5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

This is a re-iteration of what Paul said in vs 3, but in vs 3 Paul was taking them back to the beginnings of their journey with Jesus. *3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the*

flesh?

This verse says the same thing but here Paul speaks in the present tense, not the recalling of past events. The same Spirit who began a work with them is still providing sweet fellowship and working miracles among them. Are you going to set Him aside and do the rest in the flesh.

5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

How do we enjoy our relationship with Jesus? Does it happen because we engage in fleshly rituals. Does the sweet fellowship come from legalism to some kind of traditions. Do stuff. Do stuff. Do stuff. Keep church traditions. Jump through church hoops. Is that what engages the Spirit?

Or is it hearing with faith. Do we find Jesus because we long for His fellowship and we open His word and spend time alone with Him.

Our fallen flesh doesn't like the mystical spiritual work of looking into God's book and then praying for what we need. We would far rather have a physical regimen to accomplish with our minds dis-engaged.

A prayer rug and a speaker in a tower calling everyone to face mecca and bob up and down would be fine with us. Do stuff. Get it over with in a few minutes and then go back to whatever worldly thing we're engaged in. That's what our flesh wants. Cleansings and rituals with our minds dis-engaged. That appeals to fallen flesh.

Jesus says, go into your closet. Speak to me from your heart. Then open up my book and let my Spirit speak back to you. That's way harder. No wonder we default back to bobbing up and down and chanting mindlessly. Our flesh can accomplish that stuff, no Jesus needed.

But Paul says, if you want the miracle of His fellowship, you need to keep moving with the same Holy Spirit that you began with. Jumping through

mindless hoops is going nowhere. Legalism is all of flesh. We can do it disengaged from Jesus.

But it's an end in itself. No fellowship. No sanctification. No progress in our fallen selves moving closer to being like Christ. No christian growth. No nothing.

Christianity is a walk with God. Daily interaction. Daily time spent together. Daily communion. Marriage to a partner is a picture of the kind of relational walk with a partner that we have as we spend a lifetime walking every day, every day, with Jesus.