



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Cure For Spiritual Dullness

GALATIANS 3.1-5

2/6/13

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / Don.Garner@capitolcom.org

“Are you that stupid?” is how one version translates Paul’s question to the Galatian believers in the passage below. Yet, it is not their intelligence that he calls into question. It is their perception of spiritual things that is Paul’s chief concern. How could they be so spiritually dull? Have they no ability to perceive the important distinctions regarding their spiritual beginnings, progress and experiences in the faith?

We all get a little fuzzy headed sometime. It is too easy to become distracted with the trivial and completely lose sight of the significant. At times we are persuaded too easily without really engaging our powers of perception. Often our dullness is a reflection of plain ol’ laziness. In spiritual matters, dullness can be disastrous.

In this passage we find God’s cure for spiritual dullness.

Galatians 3.1-5: ¹O Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed among you as crucified? ²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

1. REMEMBER SPIRITUAL BEGINNINGS (1-2)

In these verses Paul takes up a new line of attack in responding to his opponents and reproving the Galatian believers. He chides them for becoming dull in their perception of spiritual things. How have they fallen under the spell of some “evil eye” when Christ has been so clearly displayed before their eyes as crucified? Has this image of Christ been clouded in their eyes?

The message of Christ and Him crucified was the indispensable core of Paul’s gospel. This is the very gospel message which was received by the Galatian believers. Receiving the Spirit was the sign and seal of their faith in the message preached, not the product of having carried out the legal requirements of the Law of Moses.

“O FOOLISH GALATIANS! WHO HAS BEWITCHED YOU...?”

“This only I want to learn from you...” Paul considers his argument to turn on their answer to this one question. Was it by law-keeping that you came to faith in Christ or hearing and believing the message of Christ crucified? No believer can look back and say they became a Christian by placing themselves under the works of the law. Every Christian knows it was only by the reception of the gospel message by faith.

2. IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL PROGRESS (3)

“Are you so foolish?” Paul’s question is confrontational, to say the least. Some would say it is rude and offensive. The question assumes their answer to the previous question—that they received the Spirit by the hearing of faith. Upon placing their explicit faith in the message preached, the message of Christ crucified, they received the Spirit. The Spirit was not given to them upon their submission to the works of the law. It is by faith that we are justified before God, evidenced by our receiving His Spirit.

Having received the Spirit by faith in the message preached, Paul asks, will you now go on towards the finish line in the power of the flesh? God’s work in our lives began by faith and through the power of His Spirit. It is simple-minded of us, spiritually speaking, to imagine that we now progress toward maturity in Christ through the works of the law. Your life in Christ began when you were justified by faith. Your life in

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS LATER)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY: FRIDAY BREAKFAST @ 8AM IN MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (E2.1002)

Texas

The Cure For Spiritual Dullness

Christ progresses as you are sanctified by faith in Christ through the power of His Spirit. Your spiritual growth, your sanctification, is not a product of your own efforts any more than your justification was.

3. EVALUATE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (4-5)

Paul has appealed to the first-hand experience of the reader, encouraging reflection upon beginnings and progress in their spiritual lives. Now he reminds them of the difficulties they have faced in their new lives in Christ. He calls to mind God's daily provision of the power and desire to live their lives unto Him and the powerful work of His Spirit among them.

Was all this the product of their scrupulous adherence to the works of the law? Certainly not! This activity of God among them was the result of their daily trust in Christ. Identifying with Him in His death and resurrection, they allowed Christ to live His life through them. The abundant supply of God's Spirit and His powerful works among them were not produced by law-keeping, but by child-like trust in the One who had justified them.

And so it is in your life and mine. The means to enjoying God's blessing and power in our lives is faith in Christ rather than scrupulous law-keeping.

CONCLUSION

Traffic citations or fender-benders, forgetting an important anniversary, making a questionable financial decision, and so forth, are examples of how easily we drift into absent-mindedness or distraction. Each of us suffers the negative consequences that result from such moments. Sometimes our failure to reflect can bring much more grave consequences. Never are they more grave than when they involve matters of eternal consequence.

“...HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT, ARE YOU NOW BEING MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH?”

As believers in Christ, we will be tempted to shift from dependence upon God to self-reliance in our spiritual lives. Having begun in faith, we can gradually, and without even noticing, drift into outward religious observance.

Vigilance is a daily necessity in our spiritual lives. Wake up! Pay attention! Don't be foolish or careless in how you proceed in the Christian life!

What should you do when you sense spiritual dullness coming on?

1. Remember Spiritual Beginnings
2. Identify Spiritual Progress
3. Evaluate Spiritual Experience