

Five Questions to Check Your Faith (Or What Gospel Do You Believe?)

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[0 : 00] So Paul has some questions for the Galatians, and he basically has five different ones. One is a question of delusion. In other words, are you nuts? The other one is a question of conversion.

One is a question of perfection. One of affliction, and then one of reception. And so Galatians is an answer to Judaizers. And by the way, I keep referring, as I grade papers, comments are made that demonstrate that these dear people who are students at Colorado Christian University don't understand faith in Christ.

They just don't get it. And so they'll make a comment, and I'll point them to so many different verses, either in Romans or Galatians, to say, Jesus did it all, right?

All to him I owe. Nothing in my hands I bring. It's Jesus. So, the question of delusion, verse 4. Essentially what he's asking here is, do you tend to turn off your mind when people tell you your salvation and spiritual life is about you? It's all about you and your work?

[1 : 17] He says, oh, unthinking Galatians, who deluded you? Who tricked you? Who bewitched you? Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was so graphically portrayed as having been crucified?

It's not that they saw it, but they heard the word, and they understood that the worst thing that could ever happen to an individual, the most humiliating, despicable, dishonorable thing to happen to anybody in the Roman Empire was to be crucified on a cross.

And yet Jesus did it. He says, oh, for the joy that was set before him. He passed through. He went to the cross deliberately for his people, for you who believe in him.

And they heard it. They listened to it. In fact, he said earlier in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. And it's no longer me that's alive.

It's Christ in me. The hope of glory, my paraphrase. They saw it. They understood it. And he says, you know, I see you're dull.

[2 : 27] You're foolish. You're senseless. You're unthinking. He wasn't very politically correct. But he's scolding them. They should have known better. Why did Jesus go to the cross if you, Judaizers, and you, Christians in Galatia, think that you have to do it all?

What's the point? Why didn't you go to the cross? There is a, I brought this up before, there is a teaching that's becoming more and more popular, advocated by theologians and different groups of people perpetuated by a man by the name of N.T. Wright.

He's a scholar, an Anglican pastor. And his, it's called Federal Vision. Basically, Federal Vision says, the theology of Federal Vision says that, pretty much what the Judaizers said, you enter in to faith in Christ and you're saved by grace.

But, when you finally die and go to heaven, God will look at all the works you've done. Plus your faith. Did you have enough? Did you do enough? Did you do it with proper belief?

Paul says, we are justified in Christ now. Right now. And they call it a future justification. John Piper is another guy who's picked up on it and is starting to teach that.

[4 : 00] You know, I'll tell you, if this is Christianity, I'm, like I said before, I'm finished. I'm tired. I'm already tired. I don't want to try, there are so many rules and regulations that Christians keep keeping on and expecting my family and me and, you know, I'm sure you've been around them.

You know, oh, you didn't do that. You ate cake? You know what's going to happen to you. You're going to die. You can't have cake. You know, you can't drink soda.

Shame on you if you have coffee. How spiritual can you be? You smoke? You don't know. The list is endless and it's such a burden and Jesus says, I mean, this is the whole point, is to rest in him,

not to work for us.

So he says, well, what is wrong with you? How is it that you've been so deceived you know better? And it really means that it's an attitude of the heart and capacity of the mind.

It's not mental ignorance, but rather willful, sinful neglect to use one's mind to question if these people are really teaching the truth according to God's word.

[5 : 13] Are you foolish? Are you that foolish? He asked. He's trying to wake them up. They are considered foolish because they exchange a truth for a lie, peace for trouble, assurance for doubt, joy for fear, and freedom for bondage.

I'm too much of a rebel to be caught in chains. And I'll tell you that, you know, there have been churches that I've served as a pastor where people loved to keep other people in bondage.

Talk about PTSD. So, they're detractors, he asked. Who's bewitched you? Who's deluded? Who's cast a spell on you that you can't think clearly any longer?

So, what's his point? Believers who insist on being senseless and thoughtless and foolish do not get involved in the truth and the message in the New Testament.

And when I look back in my life, all the different times that I've found it, and quite frankly, I can understand how people get caught up in cults. You know, you get connected and then you get deeply connected and then you begin to, wow, I want to be like them and you hold on to all these rules and regulations, cultic views.

[6 : 37] And this is exactly what he's talking about. You end up being chained. It's senseless, thoughtless.

And in those situations, you are not allowed to think with skepticism. Oh, you don't have faith. Yeah, but I didn't know that God wouldn't allow me to have chocolate cake.

Oh, yeah. What Paul's saying is be skeptical about the laws that are being imposed on you and go back to what Jesus did for you on the cross.

He paid for all that. The second question is a question of conversion. He says, did you get the Holy Spirit or get converted by your good works or was it faith in Christ?

He said, I just want to know something. Did you receive the Spirit of God by doing good works or did you receive the Spirit of God by faith? The Spirit of God is intensely, immensely involved in the life of a Christian.

[7 : 48] If it were not for the Spirit of God, we would not have ears to hear and eyes to see. Our hearts would not be reborn. Right? And so what he's asking is, was it you who was reborn?

The way he words it is to essentially say, you know, to use the analogy, did you, little baby, decide to become a little baby in your mother's womb and was it up to you to be born, to come out of the birth canal?

Was that your work? Of course not. That's what John 3 is all about. It's the work of the Spirit. And so he asked them, okay, you have a choice.

Is it the work of the Spirit in your life or is it the work of your works? Or is it the work of people who want to be your Holy Spirit in your life?

what he wants us to understand? Was it by law or by gospel? Was it by works or by grace?

[8 : 56] One of the best things that we can do as Christians is to understand the role of the law but understand even more the role of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

Law has its place but it does not save. It is the model but it's not the means for salvation.

But they want to make it the means. And I believe why some people want to make it the means of being a Christian and being saved is because and usually what happens is the leader or individual will come up with all these laws because that person can live those laws.

Now he wants you to live those laws. And we can't be fooled. We need to go back to the cross of Jesus and look to him.

Coming to faith in Christ is the work of the Spirit. So Paul is asking what did they do to be saved? Jesus essentially tells us in John 3 that we must be born again.

[10 : 00] The third question is a question of perfection or completion. Essentially he asks have you come to faith in Jesus but believe your Christian life your maturity your completeness is by your efforts?

He says it this way are you so foolish so thoughtless having begun your life in Christ in the Spirit are you now brought to completion or perfection become mature by your works?

No. It's not to say that once we become Christians we do not do good works but we don't do good works to make God love us more.

We don't go to devotions so that God would be happy with us. We don't go to all the Bible studies so God would give us greater a golden brownie points.

We don't pray from four to six in the morning so that God would be happy with our prayers. We do it out of the love that we have and appreciation for Jesus as already done for us.

[11 : 14] there's a difference between blind obedience and loving response in obedience to our Father.

That's what he's trying to get across. What he's saying the life in the Spirit this regeneration it's the Spirit the Spirit is the one who makes us born again. He regenerates us He gives us ribs He regenerates us He indwells us He baptizes us in the Spirit and He seals us to the day we go to heaven all the way.

It's His work He gives us ribs and Paul brings all this out to show that it's by faith in Christ alone by faith alone. I don't know about you but there are many times when I just I would rather I'd like to find an empty spot deep in the woods far far away from a lot of Christians because I'm so tired by all the expectations that they have that Jesus would never have placed on me.

Jesus says come to me all you are who are what? Weary. Are you weary? Yes. I'm tired and not just working and being a grandpa but I am super tired when I hear people constantly say yes but you didn't do this.

That's not the Christian life. I, you know, my wife and I do what we do for a little grandson not because the court told us to and not because we're expected to and not because we have rules that say we have to.

[13 : 08] We do what we do for a little grandson. As hard and tiring as it is it's because of love. Right? And that's exactly Jesus loved us first and because of that we love him too.

It's a contrast to life in the flesh work and self-effort everything that I can do strict obedience to the law work, ceremonial law self-effort moral law ceremonies rules, regulations in order to become complete or perfect in Christ.

No. It's not. It's by faith. It's by faith that the Holy Spirit would work in us and we exercise those things.

We practice those things. We obey. Another word for obedience in the Old Testament is to apply to do what you're being taught. But it's the Spirit who gives us the power and the ability to do that not our own efforts.

I think I told you the story when I was stationed in Fort Polk, Louisiana and started going to a group that they were trying to start a Plymouth Brethren Church.

[14 : 29] Both of them had been at Moody. One was a young lieutenant and the other was his friend and he was the missionary. So they had started this group and had become rather legalistic but I didn't know what I was stepping into.

and they really believed in discipline. They loved discipline. When you're in the army there's this thing called discipline. I already knew about discipline.

But I'll never forget this man. Those of you who have heard it and you can get to hear it again. He's a young man my age who was attending and one time I went out out of our meeting I think it was on a Sunday it was after the worship time and went outside and he was just sobbing and I went over and I said what's wrong?

Are you okay? He said I want to be a Christian but I can't. And I'm a young Christian but I knew better than that. I said what do you mean you can't if you want to be?

If you want to be then God is moving in you to be. You just believe in what Jesus has done for you. So why can't you?

[15 : 48] He said because Wes told me I would never be a Christian unless I quit smoking. Really? So that's the unforgivable sin.

He said well you know Wes knows he went to the Bible Institute and he was so wracked by that and so disturbed and so I presented to him what it meant.

Trust and faith in Christ alone is resting in Christ and his work and guess what? If you think smoking is a sin you're sinning oh but Jesus paid for that too.

Wes came at him again and again and again because he was convinced you couldn't be a Christian unless you made your life right first. And then what I heard a month later maybe it was less than

that he ended up in the psych ward he had attempted suicide because God didn't love him and wouldn't accept him.

I've heard countless stories like that. Beloved if you're at that point don't look to what you can or cannot do look to Jesus trust in him and him alone.

[17 : 12] So the fourth question is have your experiences or persecution in your Christian life wasn't because you're such a good person because of your hard work experience and suffering for Christ through your own effort for nothing?

In other words have you suffered all these things as a Christian because of your profession of faith and true conversion or was it because you're working so hard and people are picking on you because you're working so hard?

And that's what they believed. In other words what has your life been all about? You or Jesus? Where is Jesus in your affliction?

Where is Jesus in your suffering? Are you persecuted because of your identity with your good works or because of your identity with Jesus good works?

And finally the last question that he asks is a question of reception verse 5 of reception Did you receive new life in Jesus and the gifts of the spirit because you worked so hard to follow the law?

[18 : 31] Does God who super abundantly that's the word there super abundantly supply his spirit to you and produces miracles in your life was it because of your works of the law or by hearing of the faith?

was it because you were so good and obedient? I know people who follow Bill Gothard who said yeah I do enough good works I have been obedient enough oh so you don't need Jesus you just don't you know collect your two hundred dollars make it all the way to heaven on your own yeah that is not the good news it was by the spirit who worked powers and signs and miracles among them not by their works does God bless you on the basis of your effort and law works on the basis of his grace through faith so I would just encourage you to consider there's this there's this divide between law and grace and law has its purpose if you want to read a good commentary read Luther's commentary in

Galatians there are other good ones too your pastor can tell you about those but you have to understand that law and grace are not intertwined like the Judaizers wanted it you don't come to faith in Christ and now all the rest is up to you it's you come to faith in Christ and it's the spirit's work to take you all the way it's the spirit's work to motivate you it's the spirit's work to give you the love and the empowerment and all that you need by grace to live the Christian life and when you feel you've come to the end then you turn to Jesus and say I can't do it anymore I go back to resting in you you don't need to be burdened you don't need to be beaten down you don't need to be criticized you don't need to be condemned because if you were in Jesus he took it all already and I hope you believe that and I hope you embrace that rest in him because his burden is light his yoke is with you father grant us daily the understanding let us not be tricked into thinking that it's all up to us to come to faith or to remain in faith but rather help our eyes to be focused on

Jesus Jesus the one who is crucified for us and allow your spirit to work mightily in us not only as individuals but in this church and may this be a church known for its love for you that relishes in the grace and the mercy that you grant through Jesus in whose name we ask amen amen amen wasn't that great for you for you for you for you for you for you for you for you for you for you