



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

NOG #14: Receiving the Spirit

Bible Reading: Galatians: 3:1-6

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

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SUMMARY: Paul proclaimed Christ crucified & observed the Galatians' life-changing reception of the Holy Spirit. Now Paul unleashes a barrage of questions—on what basis did they get the Spirit—by adopting Jewish rites, or via faith? That's a 'no-brainer,' as ex-pagans the Jewish option was a non-starter. Today's Protestants & Evangelicals know the kneejerk answer—'Saved by faith, not works.' But maybe we're missing something crucial—God's initiative precedes ours. 'Faith' here isn't our fragile human faith, it's the 'faith of *Jesus Christ*'—his faithfulness in fulfilling God's mission even to the cross. His faithfulness trumps our wavering faith. Christians may suffer 'salvation anxiety,' they can question or even 'lose their faith.' Nevertheless our salvation & the Spirit's reception are secured by Christ's own faith. Our believing simply 'echoes' the Son of God's faith.

I. Key to Galatians: the priority of divine action over human action

- "The priority of Christ's (or God's) willing & doing over any human will or action is the...keynote of [Galatians]."—Richard Hays
 - A. In Paul's Conversion & Calling
 - B. Galatians: God's action has priority over Human action (Gal. 4:9)
 - "But now that you know God—or, *I should say, now that God knows you*—how is it that you want to turn back...?" (4:9 GNT)
 - C. Receiving the Spirit—Due to Our Initiative or God's? (Gal. 3:1-5)
 - Crucial Question—Whether Paul attributes 'the receiving of the Spirit to human action...or to the divine initiative'?—R. Hays

II. Gal. 3:1 Paul Proclaimed & Portrayed Christ Crucified

- A. “Foolish Galatians! Who...cast a spell on you?” (Gal. 3:1a)
- B. Paul proclaims & portrays Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1b)
 1. “Christ crucified” = the Gospel
 2. Paul’s Proclamation: the base for Galatians’ experience
 3. Paul’s portrayal matches his proclamation (e.g. Acts 14:19-21 Paul stoned, revived & preached)

III. How did you receive the Spirit? By Human Action or Divine Initiative? (Gal. 3:2b, 5b)

- Gal. 3:2 “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by ?????? ??????? [akoes pisteos]?”
- Gal. 3:5 “Does the *One* supplying you the Spirit...*do it* because-of works of the Law, or because-of ?????? ??????? [DLNT]?”
 1. “...Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of Torah, or *by hearing & believing?*” (Gal. 3:2b NTE)
 2. “...Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by *the message that elicits faith?*” (3:2b Hays)
- A. Four possible translations of Gal. 3:2b; Gal. 3:5b
 - a. *Akoe* (i.) active: the action of hearing or (ii.) passive: that which is heard (report, message)
 - b. *Pistis* (i.) subjective: act of believing, trusting or (ii.) objective: that which is believed (the gospel = the faith cf. Gal. 1:23)
- B. Receiving the Spirit—Our Doing or God’s Doing? (Gal. 3:2b)
 1. “A far better rendering of [1.] ‘*by believing what you heard,*’ is [2.] ‘*the message that elicits faith.*’ The former *implies* that *we take the initiative, which is incorrect.* The latter *states* that *it is God’s doing.*” –Richard Hays
- C. Paul’s Gospel—Salvation results from a Divine Act
 - “*In Paul’s gospel, salvation is not from the human act of believing, but from the divine act: ‘It’s a terrible... blunder to read Paul as though his gospel made redemption contingent upon our act of deciding...’* – Richard Hays

IV. What’s the Role of our (Human) Faith?

- A. Is Human Faith a pre-condition?
 - No’: “The human faith-response to God’s action in Christ...*is not the precondition for receiving God’s blessing, instead it is the appropriate mode of response* to a blessing already given in Christ.” –Richard Hays
- B. Pitfalls of relying on our own Faith
 1. “*Much Christian preaching...has fallen into the trap of celebrating the subjective faith experience of individuals...as though we could somehow secure God’s acceptance by...our believing...*” –Richard Hays
- C. “One thing [‘faith of/in Christ’] *cannot mean* is that *the believer is held responsible for ‘manufacturing’ the faith to believe... The faith...we stand upon cannot be our own, but that of Jesus...*” –N. T. Wright
- D. Believer’s faith “answers, mirrors, reflects” the faith(fullness) of Jesus Christ
 - “The faith of Jesus Christ himself...includes...the *answering faith of believers* who claim that faith as their own” –Morna Hooker
 - The believer’s “faith *answers and reflects* [Christ’s]” –Richard Hays

V. Gal. 3:5 Ongoing Receiving the Spirit—the Result of Human Action or Divine Initiative?

- A. “*Is it our faith that plays the decisive role...Or, is it the faithful & obedient Jesus... that are decisive?*” –Douglas Harink
- B. “Salvation Anxiety:” “I [had] terrible...struggles...after I became a Christian about whether my faith was ‘real faith,’ ‘saving faith,’ or all my own effort...Was I...a true ‘Spirit-filled,’ ‘born-again’ believer or not? Did I have enough ‘faith’? Healing faith, nation-shaping faith, life-changing, problem-solving faith? What if...it wasn’t the right kind of faith?” –Steve Chalke

VI. “By Grace Alone...Divine Sovereignty–Human Responsibility...” (John 6:36-40)

“This [passage: John 6:36-40] wants to take out of our hands ‘the hard work’...of our very important & real responsibility—to *come to him [Jesus], to trust him*. Jesus wants even this most serious human responsibility to be seen as *mainly the Father’s gift to us*. Not only does *the Father* give his Son to us ‘downwards,’ but he also *gives us our faith in his Son* ‘back upward.’ The whole transaction ‘from above & from below,’ is originally & finally divine gift. *This promise...should help us to rest...& so keep us from turning our coming & trusting in Jesus into our good works* that get us faith or that earn us good graces...This makes even our human believing a gift of God...Not only is a right relation with God a matter of grace from God’s side, but [also] from our side too., for God gives both the gift of *his Son* to us & the gift of *our self-entrustment* to his Son. God gives *both sides of the salvation transaction—the divine & the human*. The ‘faith of Christ’ in Paul’s Letters can teach us a comparable truth, see Gal. 2:16-21...& Richard Hay’s study, *Faith of Jesus Christ*.” [Frederick Dale Bruner, *Gospel of John*, pp. 406-7]

VII. Gal. 3:6 “Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’.” (Gal. 3:6 NET)

QUESTIONS:

1. Paul shocked his readers by calling them “foolish (stupid) Galatians!” (Gal. 3:1)
 - a. On what basis does Paul call them “stupid, senseless”?
 - b. If he visited Christians here in 2021/22 would Paul call us “*Foolish Torontonians*”? Why or why not? Discuss.
2. Paul says “*Let me ask you this one question*” (Gal. 3:2a). He then proceeds to ask 4-6 questions. What’s his main point? How would you summarize Paul’s “*one (main) question*”?
3. This part of Galatians—Gal. 2:16-3:6—emphasizes “faith”/“believing.” Some expositors emphasize that faith here is the “*faith of Jesus Christ*”—his own faith/faithfulness. Hence they suggest that, rather than the ‘standard’ version of Gal. 2:16 —“We know...a person is...justified...*by faith in Jesus Christ*, even we ourselves have *believed* in Christ Jesus...so that we might be *justified by faith in* Christ...” (2:16 CSB), it’s better rendered: “We know that...one is justified...by the *faithfulness of Jesus Christ*. And we’ve come to *believe* in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified *by the faithfulness of Christ*” (2:16 NET)
 - a. Comparing these 2 versions; how does the 2nd change the ‘balance’ (emphasis) between our human faith (action) and divine faith/faithfulness?
 - b. Has the 2nd version eliminated the role of human faith/believing? Why or why not?
4. The key verses—Gal. 3:2b, 5b—could be rendered:
 - i. As “...Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of Torah [Law], or *by hearing & believing*?” (Gal. 3:2b NTE)
 - ii. Or “...Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by *the message that elicits faith*?” (3:2b Hays)
 - Comparing the 2 versions which emphasizes our human-faith response? Which emphasizes God’s initiative/action?
 - Richard Hays says: “A far better rendering of ‘*by believing what you heard*,’ [3:2b, 5b] is ‘*the message that elicits faith*.’ Why do you think he says this? What difference does it make (or imply)?
5. The message (& material) talks about ‘Salvation Anxiety’ [point V. 4 above]. What’s meant by that phrase? Have you or any believer you know experienced ‘salvation anxiety’? How would you help them? How might this message reduce such ‘anxiety’?
6. Read John 6:37-40. Consider: Is the emphasis on God’s doing or our own doing? Read the commentary in point VI (above)