



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Galatians: 3:1-6

Bible Reading: Galatians: 3:1-6 1 “You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! 2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the Law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so many things for nothing?—if indeed it was for nothing. 5 Does God then give you the Spirit & work miracles among you by your doing the works of the Law or by your believing what you heard? 6 Just as Abraham *‘believed God, & it was credited to him as righteousness’*.” (Gal. 3:1-6 NET)

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 also 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

– “Paul’s conversion & apostolic calling...suggest that *human agency is consequent* [subsequent] *to & the result of divine agency* in Paul’s [view of salvation].” –Jarvis Williams

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)

-> “Throughout Galatians the *priority of divine action over human action* is accentuated...In Gal. 4:9 Paul corrects himself mid-sentence: ‘now that you know God—*or, I should say, now that God knows you*...’ Paul...shift[s] from active to passive [since he] sees a difference between [our] knowing God & being known by God, and the latter is the proper view of conversion. *God’s ‘knowing’* the Galatians was prior to, & *the basis of, the Galatians coming to know God*...The distinction between *divine* and *human action is prominent* in Gal. 1-2...” [Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law & Life*, pp. 153-4]

C. Priority of divine action over human action—Galatians’ Keynote

– ‘The whole context [of Gal. 2:19-21] portrays *Christ as the active agent and Paul as the instrument* through which... Christ’s activity comes to expression...This *unrelenting emphasis on the priority of Christ’s (or God’s) willing & doing over any human will or action is the...keynote of the entire letter.*” [Richard Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, p. 155]

– The “gospel...testifies to the *priority of God’s saving action* in opposition to human endeavor... Further support...may be found in Gal. 3:2-5.” [Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law & Life*, pp. 155-6]

D. 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

-> “Gal. 3:2, 5 [is] a ‘crucial fork in the road’. ‘The commentator has to decide *whether Paul attributes ‘the receiving of the Spirit to human action...or to the divine initiative.’* To get things wrong here would [be] to ‘repeat the error of the rival missionaries by failing to acknowledge the priority & sufficiency of God’s action.’” Richard Hays [quoted E. van Driel, *Rethinking Paul*, p. 82]

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

- “You foolish Galatians! Who...cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! (Gal. 3:1 NET)
- “The meaning of Jesus Christ’s death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.” (3:1b NLT)

A. “Foolish Galatians! Who...cast a spell on you?” (Gal. 3:1a)

– “Paul likens the agitators as wielders of the evil eye...Paul establishes an implied association between those [promoting] observing the Law...[&] the influence of malevolent spiritual forces.” [Bruce Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham’s God*, p. 155]

– “It’s as if a magician has cast a spell over them, preventing them from seeing the blatantly obvious, i.e., the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, Paul may be saying that

Satan himself stands behind the deception.” [T. Schreiner, *Gal*, p. 181]

B. “Christ vividly portrayed as crucified” (Gal. 3:1b)

– “Christ...portrayed...crucified (perf.)” (3:1) “The perfect tense = a past event with continuing importance for the present identity of Jesus Christ...The resurrection does not mean...the crucifixion can be relegated to the past & forgotten.” [de Boer, *Gal.*, p 172]

C. Paul proclaims & portrays Christ

1. “Christ crucified” = the Gospel

– “*Jesus Christ...crucified*’ [is] a summary phrase [which] stands for the whole [gospel] story and distills its meaning...Paul’s opening question in Gal. 3:1 strongly implies that the image of Christ crucified...ought to make the Galatians immune from bewitchment and wandering from the ‘truth of the gospel’ (Gal. 2:14).” [Richard Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, p. 167]

2. Paul’s Proclamation: the base for Galatians’ experience

– “Gal. 3:1-5 is an appeal to the Galatians’ own experience...The purpose of Paul’s appeal to experience is to establish...that the *foundation for this experience was the gospel message* ([they ‘heard’]). The Galatians [had] these experiences because of... Paul’s proclamation of the gospel message, whose content is...Jesus Christ crucified...[This] gospel message [is] the basis for beginning (Gal. 3:2) & sustaining (Gal. 3:5) Christian existence.” [Richard B. Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, p. 168]

3. Paul’s portrayal matches his proclamation (e.g. Acts 14:19-21 Paul stoned, revived & preached)

– “Some Jews came [to Lystra]...& when they won over the crowds, *they stoned Paul & dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead*. After the disciples gathered around him, *[Paul] got up & went into the town*. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe. After they had *preached the gospel in that town & made many disciples*, they returned to Lystra...” (Acts 14:19-21)

– “I suggest...that *Paul viewed himself as the ‘public portrayal’ of Christ’s crucifixion*”— John Dunne

– “The Messiah’s crucifixion was ‘portrayed’ in Galatia. Paul may simply mean that he had described the crucifixion graphically...Some think, *Paul’s own body, battered & scarred* as it was following his various beatings & other physical abuse, *was itself a graphic demonstration*.” [N. T. Wright, *Galatians*, pp. 185-6]

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. “Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or *by hearing with faith?*” (Gal. 3:2 ESV; RSV)
2. “...Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of Torah, or *by hearing & believing?*” (Gal. 3:2b NTE)
3. “...Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard?” (3:2b CSB)
4. “...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)
1. A (i.)+B (i.) “Did you receive the spirit by doing the works of Torah, or *by hearing & believing?*” (NTE; ~WE)
 2. A. (i.)+B (ii.) “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or *by the hearing of faith preached?*” (GNV)
 3. A (ii.)+B (i.) “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or *by believing what you heard?*” (CSB) (NLT; NIV; NRSV)
 4. A (ii.)+B (ii.) “Have ye received the Spirit *on the principle* of works of law, or of [the] *report of faith?*” (Darby; Hays, Sprinkle)
- “There are multiple options for understanding the syntactical function of ????????, & part of the difficulty lies in whether we understand ?????? as “hearing” or as “message/report.” [There are also different types of genitive.] A few possibilities are [a.] attributive genitive (“hearing *with* faith” or “*faithful* hearing”), [b.] genitive of product (“hearing/ message *that produces* faith”), or [c.] genitive of content (“message *about* faith”).” [N. K. Gupta, *Intermediate Biblical Greek Reader*, Lesson #6, Galatians 3].
 - Option #1 above doesn’t specify the object of belief/hearing; it’s anthropocentric. “For Paul, trust [faith] is genuinely Christian only when it’s directed toward someone/something outside the self—God, the gospel, & the Christ it announces. Were this not the case Paul would have faith in faith, he would trust in the power of trusting...the intensity of trust. One would end up trying to ‘believe harder’; those who believed the best would be the most saved...” [Leander E. Keck, *Paul & His Letters*, p. 53]

B. Receiving the Spirit—Our Doing or God’s Doing? (Gal. 3:2b)

1. “The *priority of Christ’s (or God’s) willing & doing over any human will or action* is the...keynote of [Galatians]”-Richard Hays
2. “Fork in the Road”: “The noun *ako?* can sometimes mean ‘hearing,’ but Paul’s use of it...in Rom 10:16-17 suggests that he understands it to mean ‘what is heard’ – in other words, the proclaimed message...Here the interpreter of the letter is faced with *a crucial fork in the road.*”

Does Paul attribute the receiving of the Spirit to a human action ('hearing with faith/'believing what you heard') or to divine initiative ('the message that elicits faith')?' –Richard Hays

3. "A far better rendering of [1.] 'by believing what you heard,' [Gal. 3:2b, 5b] is [2.] 'the message that elicits faith.' The former [1.] 'by believing what you heard,' *implies* that we take the initiative, which is incorrect. The latter [2.] by 'the message that elicits faith' *states* that it is God's doing." – Richard Hays

4. God was at work powerfully...as Paul announced the message about Jesus... *This emphasis on the divine initiative* makes it more likely...the word *akoe*, in the phrase... 'hearing & faith,' should be taken as a reference to 'the message that was heard' rather than the act of hearing itself...The parallel...Rom. 10:16-7 suggests...*it is the message itself that's doing the work.*"—N. T. Wright

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 to dispose ourselves toward God in a particular way.'*" [Richard B. Hays, Faith of Jesus Christ, p. 211]

D. Traditional antitheses—Not by *our "works of the law,"* but by *our faith, "believing what you heard"* (Gal. 3:3, 5)

– "Faith, in this context...is the antithesis [opposite] of ['works of the Law']...It [faith, allegedly] is not an accomplishment. Yet—and *here is the problem*—it *seems* like an accomplishment...[This suggests] a person is justified *by the adequacy of one's faith* instead of by the adequacy of one's deeds. 'Faith' *seems* to be a type of 'work'." [Jouette M. Bassler, Navigating Paul, p. 26]

– "Traditional translations of...Gal. 3:2 are incorrect...Paul [contrasts]...acts done by human beings and acts carried out by God... The question...in Gal 3:2 is...: 'Did you receive the Spirit because of *something you did*...or...as the result of *something God did* —[i.e.,]...the result of the proclamation in which God...elicit[s] faith?...The difference between [this]...and the traditional...is monumental." [J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians," Interpretation (July 2000) p. 250]

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

– "In Paul...the... 'faith of Christ'...is...a divine rather than a human action: *human faith is not itself the means* of bringing about the righteousness 'derived from God,' but *merely the mode of its reception*..." [Markus Bockmuehl, *Phil.*, p. 211]

– "According to Paul...*Our relationship of trust with God is restored through the faith of Jesus Christ. Those who receive this good news respond to it in turn with trust.* Their *pistis*, [faith,

trust]...becomes shaped by the pattern of Jesus' own faith-obedience. That's part of what Paul means when he says...those whom God calls are to be 'conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8:29)." [Richard B. Hays, "Salvation by Trust? Reading the Bible Faithfully," Christian Century (1997) pp. 218-23]

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...Galatians has often been exploited for proof texts defending exactly this message."—Richard Hays

2. "Marcus Barth argued that *if we are justified through [our] faith in Christ, then people are 'totally delivered to the sincerity, depth, [and] certainty of their own faith'*." [Michael Horton, *Justification*, V. 2, p.]

3. "For Paul the theme of trust—*pistis*—is...intimately related to...right relations between God & humans...But...an important caveat here. *We must not suppose that we can place ourselves in right relation to God through our own act of trust, as though faith were a meritorious work*...Paul's argu[es] that...relationship is restored by God's initiative 'through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'."—Richard Hays

C. "One thing ['faith of/in Christ'] *cannot mean* is that *the believer is held responsible for 'manufacturing' the faith to believe*. For it is only through Christ's vicarious death & resurrection that we partake of his faith & faithfulness. [So,]...the case becomes rather strong...that *the faith...we stand upon cannot be our own, but that of Jesus*, upon whose merit alone we may hope to be justified" —N. T. Wright

D. Believer's faith "answers, mirrors, reflects" the faith(fullness) of Jesus Christ

– "*Pistis Christou* "begins, always, from the faith of Jesus Christ himself, but includes...the *answering faith of believers* who claim that faith as their own"—Morna Hooker

– The believer's "faith *answers & reflects* [Christ's]—indeed participates in his—because...it's God's design for us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29)." —Richard Hays

– "Believers or followers of Christ are 'baptized into,' 'believe into,' & participate in Christ...& in this way are justified & gradually transformed through the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ. In this was the faithfulness of God is mirrored by the *faithfulness of Christ, which is in turn mirrored by the faith of the community*; thus the phrase '*faith of Christ*' has its primary reference to the individual faithfulness of Christ, but also to the kind of faithfulness believers have as they participate in Christ." [David L. Stubbs, "*Shape of Soteriology & the pistis Christou Debate*," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 61 (2008) p.]

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

1. "The larger...question: *Is it our faith that plays the decisive role...Or, is it the faithful & obedient Jesus* in his crucifixion & God's vindication of Jesus' faithfulness in raising him for the dead *that are*

*decisive?...*If [it's the latter] then this...is contradicted by rendering *pistis Christou*...as [our] '*faith in Jesus Christ*.'" –Douglas Harink

– “Does God give you the Spirit...by...works of the law? Or is it by *believing what you heard* [or '*hearing with faith*'?]” (Gal 3:5)

2. Richard “Hays [says] the phrase '*by hearing with faith*' in Gal. 3:5 *cannot refer to our faith* because the 'accent in Gal 3:5 falls heavily upon the action of God' [How 'does God give you the Spirit...'? (3:5a)].” [K. McFadden, *Faith in the Son of God*, p.]

3. “Paul is taking all the responsibility for earning salvation away from the Galatians—it isn't about them or anything they do, he insists. It's about Jesus & *his* faith...Jesus was faithful... In the contemporary...Christianity, *we are obsessed with believing the right things, or with having enough faith*, to earn God's love & salvation...Paul's message [is] that our salvation is a gift bestowed...by the faithfulness of Jesus, the Christ, & not because of anything we've done *or anything we have believed*.” [Stephen Smith, *Saving Salvation*, pp.]

4. Richard “Hays was categorical, arguing that to speak as though *the 'work' called faith is the thing* that we really have to do to please God, is to betray a *fundamental misconception*...Paul's primary emphasis...is Christ's faithfulness rather than our struggling human faith. Christ's allegiance to his divine mission is the source of our acceptance by God...”–Steve Chalke

5. “Salvation Anxiety:” “I [had] terrible internal struggles...after I became a Christian about whether my faith was 'real faith,' 'saving faith,' or all my own effort. Was I really a Christian or just a fake? Was I the real thing, 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, *Lost Message of Paul?* p.]

6. “Paul speaks of the '*pistis* of Jesus'...in Rom. 3:22...‘we are saved by Jesus' faithfulness to God.'...In truth our faith...can't be separated from Jesus' faithfulness...on the cross & we respond by living faithfully to him & placing our trust in him... Remembering our salvation flows from Jesus' faithfulness, not merely our state of belief, *keeps us from turning... faith into...works-righteousness*, as if...saying 'I believe in Jesus' is what saves us.” [*Theology of Work Bible Commentary*, p.]

7. “*Paul does not teach that we are justified by our faith in Christ, but rather...that we are justified by Christ's faith(fullness)*. ...Paul teaches that *we are saved not by our action*, whether our works or *even our faith, but by God's action* in the faithful death of Christ...This doesn't mean that our faith is excluded...as we believe, we ourselves participate in Christ's faith(fullness).” [Kevin McFadden (on R. Hays' view), *Faith in the Son of God*, pp.]

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

- Jesus said: “37 Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, & the one who comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. 39 This is the will of him who sent me: that I should lose none of those he has given me but should raise them up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son & believes in him will have eternal life, & I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:37-40 CSB)

- “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 or *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'?