

“Questions, questions, questions.” (7)

A father and son went fishing one day and while they were out on the water, the boy suddenly became curious about things in general and started asking all sorts of questions. He asked his father, ‘Why does the boat float?’ The father replied, ‘Don’t rightly know son.’ A little later, the boy looked at his father and asked, ‘How do fish breath underwater?’ Once again, the father replied, ‘Don’t rightly know son.’ A little later the boy asked his father, ‘Why is the sky blue?’ Again, the father replied. ‘Don’t rightly know son.’ Finally, the boy asked his father, ‘Dad, do you mind my asking you all of these questions?’ The father replied, ‘Of course not, if you don’t ask questions, you never learn anything.’

Now I don’t know about you but I love asking questions because they are a good way to learn new things. Questions are also a great way to find out what people really think about any given topic. But as I’ve discovered over the years, when it comes to questions about our faith and beliefs, anyone can ask questions but the secret is asking the right question.

And Jesus was certainly good at asking the right questions. In **Matthew 21** when the Jesus entered the temple courts the religious leaders were questioning about Jesus about His authority. But Jesus had some questions for them and He asked them in **Matthew 21:24-26** “Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

You see anyone can asks questions, but Jesus was the Master of asking the right questions because the answer would always reflect what was going on in people’s hearts. And as we enter **Galatians 3** we’re going to see that the apostle Paul also was very good at asking questions, but not just any old questions, the right questions. In **Galatians 3** Paul is going to turn his attention to a specific problem the Galatians were facing. And that is the problem of returning to the bondage of circumcision and law-keeping.

Paul begins by asking a series of questions to shock them into the reality concerning what they were actually doing, which was turning away from the grace of God. **Galatians 3:1** “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.” Paul is amazed that they are being enticed by the Judaizing teachers to return to a covenant of condemnation. He said earlier if you remember in **Galatians 1:6** “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.”

You see what the Galatians were doing was turning from trusting in God’s grace to trusting in their own performance of law-keeping, specifically the performance of Old Testament law and Jewish religious regulations. And Paul says that’s ‘foolish’ which in Greek means, ‘spiritually dull.’ In other words, if you go back to law keeping you’re actually becoming spiritually dull.

And that’s the problem of legalism and law keeping, it makes people void of righteousness. Legalism and law keeping emphasises on the externals and in doing so a person’s internal self, dies spiritually. You get to the point where you’re concentrating so much on self-righteousness, you actually end up sacrificing the righteousness of God.

Paul says the Galatians are so spiritually dull, he asks the questions, ‘Who has bewitched you?’ Now this carries with it the idea of someone casting a spell over you and in the original Greek it literally says, ‘to give an evil eye.’ In other words, they have temporarily lost their reasoning concerning the very nature of how a person is saved. And because some were giving them the evil eye, they were seduced into taking their eyes off Jesus.

And so, Paul reminds them of Who they should be looking at by saying, ‘Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.’ The Galatians had taken their eyes off the Jesus that had been preached to them by Paul. They had cast their eyes upon the proposals of the Judaizing teachers and were fascinated by what they were teaching.

Paul says Christ and His crucifixion was ‘clearly portrayed’ to them, in other words, it was announced publicly. Paul had preached Jesus Christ and His crucifixion in such a vivid manner that it was as if they had personally experienced the crucifixion in Galatia. They took their minds off Christ and started to focus on themselves and Paul was astonished by how quickly they were turning away from the Gospel.

And church, there's a lesson here for us all, **isn't there?** Because it never ceases to astonish me how quickly some Christians agree with some new doctrine without stopping to study it first. Let me ask you, **what is it that is bewitching you? What's taking your eyes away from Jesus? Are you being tempted by the Gospel of prosperity? What about the doctrine of once saved always saved?** Maybe the world is putting pressure on you and you're starting to spend more time focussing on other things and less time with your eyes focused on Jesus. Maybe your job is taking over your faith life, maybe your hobbies and interests are making you spiritually dull.

Hebrews 12:1+2 "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." That word 'fixing' there, literally means to glue, to stick. And so, loved ones, we need to permanently glue our eyes on Jesus because whenever we take our eyes off of Him, we can easily be led astray by the fascination of something else.

And so, after asking the first question, Paul goes on to ask another question. **Galatians 3:2** "I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?" Now what does Paul mean here? Is he referring to their baptism when they received the Holy Spirit? Or is he referring to the time an apostle laid his hands upon them to receive the miraculous gifts? Now the simple answer is, we simply don't know.

Acts 15:12 tells us that Paul worked many miracles among them. We know that he had established churches in this region on the **first missionary journey**, as well as, visited them on **the second**. And I'm pretty certain that he would have had laid hands on those members with whom he had personal contact. We also need to remember Peter later went through this region and also would have laid hands on the members of the church on whom Paul hadn't laid hands in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

But like I said, we can't be sure but if Paul does have in mind the miraculous receiving of the Spirit by the laying on of his hands, then his argument is quite forceful. He's actually telling them, if they had received the Spirit by the laying on of the hands of those who preached the Gospel of grace. Then they didn't receive the Spirit as a result of some meritorious work they performed or by their perfect obedience to law. Because the Spirit Himself was a free gift that came as a result of God's grace.

Jesus says to the disciples in **Matthew 10:7+8** "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." The authority to exercise the miraculous gifts of the Spirit was a free gift, the apostles didn't earn the gift, and neither did the Galatians.

And so, when Paul asks the Galatians that question, his question actually demands an obvious answer. **And what is the answer?** The answer was that they didn't receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as the result of some debt that God had to give to them, as a result of their works of law.

And as we learned a while back, it was only the apostles who had the ability to bestow Christians with miraculous gifts by the laying on of their hands. You hear about all these so-called Christians claiming to have the gift of prophesying or healing. And they tell us you're not a real Christian if you don't possess the gift of tongues. **Are they so spiritually dull? Who has bewitched them?**

Any Bible student with half a brain can clearly see that the miraculous gifts the first century church possessed was given through the laying of the apostle's hands. And since there are no living apostles today, and since they served their purpose of building up the infant church, we can be certain that God doesn't work that way today. These people need to take their eyes off from what they think they see and look at Jesus. Or as Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:7** "For we live by faith, not by sight".

And so, Paul continues and asks yet another question in **Galatians 3:3+4** "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?" Paul says that they are so spiritually dull, they can't see just how foolish their actions are.

You see the Holy Spirit initiated salvation by bringing to them the Gospel through inspired preaching. They now assume that they can complete the work of the Spirit by adding their meritorious deeds or works of law keeping through circumcision and ceremonies. In other words, in **chapter 2** they were thinking that Christ didn't do enough on the cross and here in **chapter 3** they are thinking that the Holy Spirit didn't do enough.

They forgot how their spiritual life began, it began in Christ. And so, Paul is asking them **how can they add or do anything more to complete their salvation?** He says later in **Galatians 3:11** “Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” In **Galatians 4:9** he says, “But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”

Loved ones, don't fall into the trap of thinking that observing law and keeping traditions will actually help you spiritually. All they do is create a desire to please men and they can never bring you into a relationship which continually seeks to please God. Nothing can choke the heart and soul out of walking with God like legalism.

Let me tell you about a man named Hans the tailor. Because of his reputation, an influential entrepreneur visiting the city ordered a tailor-made suit. But when he came to pick up his suit, the customer found that one sleeve twisted that way and the other this way, one shoulder bulged out and the other caved in. He pulled and managed to make his body fit. As he returned home on the bus, another passenger noticed his odd appearance and asked if Hans the tailor had made the suit. Receiving an affirmative reply, the man remarked, ‘Amazing! I knew that Hans was a good tailor, but I had no idea he could make a suit fit so perfectly on someone as deformed as you.’

You see, that is what some people do in the church. They get some idea of what the Christian faith should look like and then we push and shove people in to the most grotesque configurations until they fit wonderfully. But loved ones, that is death, it's a wooden legalism which destroys the soul.

Now we know that when Paul was preaching in Galatia he suffered great persecution. And this persecution originated from the Jews who wanted to stamp out the movement of Christianity since it was taking many from Judaism. This persecution was certainly one motivation for the Judaizing teachers to go on their campaign to recruit the Galatian churches. **Galatians 4:17** “Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them.”

We also know that these legalisers wanted to escape the persecution their fellow Jews were receiving. **Galatians 6:12** “Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.” Now remember in the early years of the beginning of the Galatian churches, there was a lot of persecution from the Jews. And so, Paul is basically asking, **what was the point of going through all that persecution, if you're going to give into them and compromise the Gospel?**

And so, from that question Paul moves onto his next question. **Galatians 3:5** “So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?” When Paul demonstrated his work among the Galatians before the Jerusalem meeting in **Acts 15**, the Jerusalem brethren stood silent. **Acts 15:12** “The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.”

Paul and Barnabas had preached the cross on the first missionary journey. And the Lord confirmed their preaching by the miraculous works of the Spirit. Which was exactly what Jesus said would happen in **Mark 16:20** “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it”.

The Hebrew writer says in **Hebrews 2:3+4** “How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

But not only had the Spirit worked miracles through Paul and Barnabas, but also the gifts of the Spirit were given to the Galatians through the laying on of Paul's hands. **Acts 19:1-6** “While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John's baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

Now loved ones, I mentioned this earlier and I'll point out again here. According to the text, [how did these disciples receive the miraculous gifts of tongues and prophesy?](#) The text says, [‘when Paul laid his hands on them’](#). Every example of people possessing miraculous gifts can be traced back to a time when an apostle laid their hands on them, with the exception of Cornelius and his household which was to prove to the Jews that the Gentiles could enter the kingdom of God.

If I was an apostle and I laid my hands on you to receive a miraculous gift, you couldn't then go on and pass that gift on to someone else. There's just no proof of that happening anywhere in the Scriptures. In other words, when the apostles died, the ability to receive these miraculous gifts died with them. [Why?](#) Because we know we now have the complete and final revelation of God through His word.

[2 Peter 1:2+3 “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness”.](#) [How do we get the knowledge to know what God is like and what He wants from us?](#)

Well, [first](#) of all, we can know Him through His Creation, through ourselves, through nature, and all of creation. We can observe all of these things, that's why Paul can say in [Romans 1:20](#), [“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”](#).

We can observe His wonders in the beauty of a flower, the flight of a bird, the snow caps of vast mountains or the beauty of a bubbling brook. We can see His vastness by the mystery of life of all forms, especially our own, and all its dimensions physical, mental, social, and spiritual. We can find it in the wonder and joy of the birth of a new child or the tender love a mother has for her new-born child.

The [second](#) way we can have knowledge of God is by how God revealed Himself through Jesus His Son. God sent to us His only begotten Son who lived in the flesh. This is what is recorded in the New Testament and He also spoke to us through the prophets of the Old Testament. But, the incarnation of God Himself as fully human gives us a most vivid way of knowing God.

[Hebrews 1:1+2 “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”](#) John says in [1 John 5:20](#) [“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true.”](#) Loved ones, one of the reasons God sent His Son to us was so we could know more about the nature of God.

[So, where do we get our knowledge about God?](#) The answer is simple, it's through our observation of creation, the Scriptures and especially the life of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. There are no new revelations to come loved ones, we have everything we need for life and godliness right here in this book we call the Bible. [Someone once said that our life in Christ can be compared to an aqueduct, the stone waterways that brought water from nearby mountains into parched cities in Italy and Spain, and that are still used in some countries today.](#)

The objective foundation of our spiritual lives, the Word of God, is like the huge stone aqueduct itself. The subjective elements, our daily experience of Christ, is like the fresh water flowing through it. Some Christians neglect the Word and seek only the subjective experience. But without the solid Word of God to contain and channel that experience, the experience itself drains away into error and is lost. Other Christians boast well-engineered aqueducts based on extensive knowledge of the Bible, but they are bone dry and they bring no refreshment. Strong spiritual lives require both a strong knowledge of the Word of God and an intimate daily relationship with Christ.

You see Paul is questioning their sensibility and he's asking them, [did the Spirit do all this miraculous work on the basis of their meritorious law-keeping or on their hearing and obeying the Gospel?](#) And once again the answer is obvious, the Spirit was working in and through them because they simply obeyed the Gospel.

Questions, questions, questions, anyone can ask questions [but why not try and ask the right question?](#) A friend once asked [Isidor I. Rabi](#), a Nobel Prize winner in science, how he became a scientist. Rabi replied that every day after school his mother would talk to him about his school day. She wasn't so much interested in what he had learned that day, but she always inquired, [‘Did you ask a good question today?’](#) [‘Asking good questions,’](#) the Rabbi said, [‘made me become a scientist.’](#)

Let me finish by asking you a good question, was the Gospel that you obeyed the same Gospel that Paul and the other apostles preached? How can you tell? Well simply ask yourself, what was your reaction to that Gospel?

Did you respond in faith to Jesus Christ being the Son of God as [Romans 10:17](#) tells us? Did you repent and change the direction of your live as [Acts 3:19](#) tells us? Did you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord of your life like [Romans 10:9+10](#) tells us? Were you fully immersed in water to receive the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit and so to be added to the Lord's church as [Acts 2:37-42](#) tells us?

You never know, asking yourself the right question, may actually lead you to the salvation of your soul.