Galatians 3:1-5

4. Arguments in support of the proposition, 3:1-4:7

i] The first argument

Argument

From 3:1 to 4:7 Paul sets out to show that as a gift of divine grace, a person who rests in faith on the faithfulness of Christ, apart from the law, stands right and holy before God and an inheritor of God's promised blessings - the gospel, of itself, apart from the law, facilitates new life in Christ.

In this passage, Paul outlines the first argument in support of his proposition: Experience shows that the renewing presence of the Spirit is a product of Christ's faithfulness, not our own, v1-5;

Issues

i] Context: See 1:1-10. Paul now embarks on a series of arguments to support his proposition, namely, that the gospel, of itself, apart from the law, facilitates new life in Christ. Paul contends that a believer, who is in the right with God on the basis of the faithfulness of Christ, freely appropriates the fullness of God's promised new life, and this apart from law-obedience, 3:1-4:11. The seven arguments are as follows:

#1. Given that experience itself demonstrates that the renewing presence of the Spirit is facilitated by the faithfulness of Christ, it is obvious that new life in Christ is not dependent on our faithfulness, 3:1-5.

#2. Scripture reminds us that those who inherit God's promised new life are the spiritual descendants of Abraham, and like Abraham, they are people who rely in faith on the faithfulness of God, 3:6-9.

#3. Scripture also makes it clear that it is not possible to inherit the blessing of new life, in all its fullness, through obedience to the law. Rather, the blessing is a product of Jesus' faithfulness to God's will, 3:10-14.

#4. The promise, a promise encapsulated in the covenant with Abraham and now realised in the gift of new life in Christ, is independent of the gift of the law, 3:15-18.

#5. The function of the Mosaic law was not to promote new life in Christ, but rather, to promote death until everything is put right by Christ, 3.19-24.

#6. The realisation of the promised blessing of a worldwide people united before God, apart from the law, further proves that new life in Christ rests wholly on what Christ has done for us and not on what we do, 3:25-29.

#7. For those in Christ, the law has completed its appointed purpose of confinement, such that in Christ we now have the full and free enjoyment of sonship in God, and this with all its associated blessings, 4:1-7.

ii] Background: See 1:1-10.

iii] Structure: *The first argument in support of the proposition*:

Proposition:

The gospel, of itself, apart from the law, facilitates new life in Christ.

Supporting argument:

#1. New life in Christ is not dependent on our faithfulness, 3:1-5;

A befuddled congregation, v1;

The gift of the Spirit, v2-5;

By works or faith? v3;

Works for nothing, v4-5.

iv] Interpretation:

#1. The first argument: The judaizers did not accept Paul's understanding of justification as rectification; they held to a limited atonement. So, they believed that the full appropriation of the promised blessings of the covenant (the fullness of new life) was by "works of the law", ie., they believed that law-obedience served to restrain sin and promote holiness for blessing. Paul, on the other hand, contended that the promised blessings of the covenant are a natural product of a person's standing in Christ.

So now, in v1-5, Paul sets out to argue his case, first by referring his readers to their Christian experience - the renewing power of the Holy Spirit (a new heart within, Jer.31:33). It was through their belief in the gospel of the crucified Christ that they received God's promised blessing (the promised blessings of the Abrahamic covenant) - life in the now through the wonder-working power of the Spirit, daily renewing them, building a new heart within. Given this fact, what has possessed them to abandon this mechanism of renewal for the subjugation of the law?

Full Justification: We have noted in 2:16, and will see again in 3:6, that the judaizers seem to agree with the proposition that a person's justification rests on the grace of God, so obviously, the problem lies with how they apply this doctrine in the Christian life. The judaizers seem to have a limited view of justification, namely, it only achieves our forgiveness. When it comes to a full participation in the promised covenant blessings, the judaizers see law-obedience as an essential supplement to the benefits of Christ's atonement. For Paul, the totality of covenant

blessings are ours in Christ apart from works of the law. A believer, through faith, is right and holy before God, and nothing can add or subtract from that.

v] Homiletics: *New life in the Spirit*

Body: See "Structure" above, v1-5, provides a useful frame for a sermon.

Text - 3:1

Arguments in support of the proposition:

#1. *Given that experience itself demonstrates that the renewing presence of the Spirit is facilitated by the faithfulness of Christ, it is obvious that new life in Christ is not dependent on our faithfulness*, v1-5.

Paul begins with a rhetorical question, "who hypnotised you Galatians", who took away your capacity to think?

Ω "-" - OH [SENSELESS GALATIANS]. Interjection.

εβασκανεν [βασκαινω] aor. "**has bewitched**" - WHO HAS BEWITCHED [YOU?]. Used in sorcery, "cast an evil eye on." "Who has hypnotised you?", Hunter.

κατα + acc. "**before**" - Usually expressing a standard, "according to the eyes", but here probably spatial, "before", as NIV. Possibly with "eye" serving to form an adverbial construction, "vividly / clearly / visibly".

οἷς dat. pro. "**your [very eyes]**" - TO WHOM [JESUS CHRIST WAS, ACCORDING TO EYES]. Dative of indirect object / interest, advantage / possession, of the verb "to put forward / placard / portray." The Galatians have been drawn aside by the "evil eye" (sorcery) of the judaizers and this because they have taken their eye off the crucified Lord. "You have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ crucified, right in front of your eyes", NJB.

προεγραφη [προγραφω] aor. pas. "**clearly portrayed**" - WAS PUT FORWARD, PORTRAYED, PLACARDED. Obviously referring to the preaching of the gospel to the Galatians by Paul and his missionary team. "Was so graphically presented as", Berkeley.

εσταυρωμενος [σταυροω] perf. pas. part. "**as crucified**" - HAVING BEEN CRUCIFIED. The nominative participle serves as the predicate of the verb "to put forward". deSilva classifies it as a subject complement in a double nominative construction. As such it asserts a fact about the object "Jesus Christ"; "Jesus Christ the crucified", Moffatt. The perfect emphasises the ongoing effects of this past event. The phrase "Christ crucified", a truth that was set before the Galatians, summarises the apostolic gospel. It was placarded before them, so how could they ignore its facts?

v2

In his second question, a question repeated in v5, Paul asks, "by what means did you Galatians receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit?" Paul asks them to think for a moment about the reception of the Holy Spirit; did they receive the Spirit on the basis of their law-obedience, or their faith-response to the gospel?

μονον adv. "**one thing**" - [THIS] ONLY [I WANT TO LEARN FROM YOU]. "I ask you only this", ESV = "answer me this single question."

μαθειν [μανθανω] aor. inf. "**to learn**" - TO BE INFORMED, FIND SOMETHING OUT. The infinitive is complementary, completing the sense of the verb θελω, "I would like". Possibly used in the Old Testament sense of learning about the will of God, but more likely in a general sense of learning about something.

αφ [απο] + gen. "**from [you]**" - Expressing source / origin.

ελαβετε [λαμβανω] aor. "**did you receive**" - YOU RECEIVED [THE SPIRIT]. "Receive" is limiting so "take hold of" is better, even emphasising the agency of God; "the Spirit bestowed upon you", Cassirer. Certainly, in part, referring to "the inception of Christian life", Martyn, so Dunn, Garlington, Barnes (regeneration / conversion), Betz ("ecstatic experience" of), Bruce, George ("receiving by faith the promise of the Spirit"), Fung ("begun their Christian lives") ... Probably not just conversion, so "progress in the faith", Dumbrell, "the wonderful new spiritual life that had come to the Galatians", Hunter. This "progress in the faith" evidences the fruits of the Spirit, 5:22-23, that are a product of being "drenched" in the Spirit, 1Cor.12:13, in fulfillment of prophecy, cf., Acts 2, and the covenant promise of a new heart within, Jer.31:33. So, this outpouring of the Spirit, "the abundant supply of the Spirit", Guthrie, v5, was theirs by responding to the gospel in faith, not law-obedience.

Interestingly, Martyn suggests that Paul raises the issue of the Spirit at this point because the judaizers were claiming that "law-obedient exegesis of scripture is the means by which one can be assured of a steady supply of the Spirit and of his wonder-working power". This is an interesting theory, and certainly possible, but the only person able to confirm it is Dr. Who!!. Martyn is surely right on the "steady supply of the Spirit". So, Paul is rightly amazed. Having experienced the "steady supply of the Spirit" through faith, the Galatians have now adopted a heresy that it is through obedience. So, "receive the Spirit" is best understood as "did you experience the renewing power of the Holy Spirit ....?"

εξ + gen. "**by**" - OUT OF, FROM. Here εκ possibly takes the not-so-common sense of cause / reason where the idea of origin is expanded somewhat. So possibly: cause, "because of"; reason, "by reason of"; result, "as a result of"; possibly means / basis, "by means of", Wuest. Cassirer opts for result, "as a result of works done", Barclay result / cause. In v5 the NIV opts for the causal sense,

"because of". "Did you receive the Spirit because you observed the law, or because you .....?" Of course, the idea of origin does work by itself; "from works of the law", Berkeley, or better, "on the basis of law", Longenecker.

νομου [ος] gen. "**the law**" - [WORKS] OF LAW. The genitive is adjectival, epexegetic, specifying the works in mind, namely those associated with the law. For "works of the law" see 2:16. Note the new perspective angle, eg., "In a nutshell, they received the Spirit not in the old era of the "flesh" (= "works of the law"), but in the new, eschatological age by "the hearing of faith", Garlington - another example of a focus on ecclesiology rather than soteriology. "Observance of God's law", Martyn.

ἢ "**or**" - Disjunctive.

εξ + gen. "**by**" - FROM. See above.

πιστεως [ις εως] gen. "**believing [what you heard]**" - [HEARING] OF FAITH. The difficulty lies in whether we take the word in its active, or passive sense, and whether it is an objective, or subjective genitive. It seems likely that it is active, "believing", although a passive sense cannot be ruled out, but there is endless debate as to whether it is subjective, "is in faith / comes of faith / accompanied by faith", or objective, "leads to faith", eg., "the proclamation that has the power to elicit faith", Martyn. Of course, it may well be a descriptive genitive which limits by qualifying the head noun "hearing", "a hearing *which is characterised by* / *which involves* faith / belief", ie., a faith / trust / believing type of hearing, the type that relies on God's promises. This term then, lit. "hearing of faith", expresses the same idea as "we believed in Christ Jesus", 2:16, and describes a faith-response to the gospel.

The phrase "hearing of faith" should not be confused with the faith act associated with justification, lit. "by means of faith of (NIV, "in") Christ", 2:16, or with lit. "by / out of faith", eg., 3:7, both of which phrases refer to God's / Christ's faith / faithfulness, upon which we place our faith. The "hearing of faith" is used of the one who responds to the gospel in faith, and as a consequence, receives the regenerative indwelling compelling presence of the Holy Spirit. See Ridderbos, or Fung for an extended discussion on the Gk. "Did you experience ..... from works of the law or from a hearing *which involves* faith."

ακοης [η] "**what you heard**" - HEARING. Most often in the NT taken in the passive sense of "tidings or news", as opposed to the active sense of "the act of hearing", and so the word often becomes a technical designation for what is preached, ie., the gospel; "the gospel message", REB. But see above.

v3

Paul's third question, supported by another in v4, asks, "Are you Galatians so stupid, that having commenced your Christian walk with the gift of the

indwelling Spirit of Christ, you now rest on law-obedience to access what is freely yours in Christ?"

οὕτως adv. "**so**" - IN THIS WAY, SO. Adverb, here of degree, "so foolish."

ανοητοι adj. "**foolish**" - SENSELESS [YOU ARE]. Predicate adjective. "How can you be so senseless?", Barclay.

αναρξαμενοι [αναρχομαι] aor. part. "**after beginning**" - HAVING BEGUN. The participle is adverbial, best treated as temporal, as NIV. Describing the beginning of a believer's Christian life in the hearing and acceptance of the gospel and the reception of the Holy Spirit, although the ongoing application and completion of that beginning is what is in Paul's mind.

πνευματι [α ατος] dat. "**with / by means of the Spirit**" - IN/BY SPIRIT. Is the dative instrumental, or local, "by", or "with/in (the sphere of)?" This dative aligns with the following dative of "flesh" ("by human effort / by means of the flesh"), so the NIV originally had the first as local and the second as instrumental, but then in NIV11 both are instrumental. It would seem likely that both are either local or instrumental, eg., Burton, "begun with Spirit ... finishing with flesh", so also Moffatt, NAB .... ("in ... in", NJB), or instrumental, eg., "did you begin by the Spirit, but are now approaching perfection by fleshly means?", Williams, so Barnes, NASB ..... Of the two meanings, an instrumental sense seems best, although the point is typically condensed. The Galatian nomists began their Christian journey by putting their trust in the faithfulness of Christ and as a consequence were judged right before God and so received the blessings of the new covenant, the gift of the Spirit being the down-payment / foretaste. As a consequence of their new standing in the sight of God, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and his indwelling compelling love = a new heart within. Having begun their Christian walk by means of the Spirit = "live by [the] Spirit", they now foolishly seek to progress their Christian life "by [the] flesh" = by obedience to the law.

επιτελεισθε [επιτελεω] pres. mid. "**are you [now] trying to attain your goal**" - [NOW] ARE YOU BEING PERFECTING / COMPLETING, FINISHING (mid = yourselves). The middle "bring [yourselves] to perfection" is better than the passive "being made perfect / being perfected", NASB, NEB ..., or "ending / completing" = "attain your goal", NIV. Surely this reflects the judaizers' sanctification by obedience position. In opposing this position, Paul is not proposing a Keswick sanctification position, a veiled perfectionism, even if there is much of the "let go and live" about it. *Sanctification, as a product of justification, is a state of holiness, which, through a reliance on the renewing power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, we strive to apply in our daily life (be what we are); albeit, always imperfectly*. "Are you trying to make yourselves perfect (when you already are) ....?"

σαρκι [σαρξ κος] dat. "**by human effort / by means of the flesh?**" - BY FLESH? The dative is instrumental, expressing means. Paul is surely referring to "works of the law" = "the strict observance of the law of Moses" to maintain and promote their Christian standing. Of course, commentators tend toward the more specific issues of "circumcision and holy days", Barnes, while new perspective commentators argue that "flesh" = "the era of the flesh, that is, the old covenant / old creation as superintended by the law of Moses", Garlington. "Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances", Phillips.

v4

"Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere?" Phillips.

επαθετε [πασχω] aor. "**have you suffered**" - DID YOU EXPERIENCE / EXPERIENCE EVIL, SUFFER [SO MUCH IN VAIN]. Paul may be referring to some specific suffering experienced by the Galatians, even just suffering in general, but it seems more likely that he is using the word here in the sense of "experience", referring to the Galatians' experience of all that is theirs through the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, including the "signs, wonders and mighty works", cf., v5, so Fung, Garlington, Martyn, Betz, Dumbrell; "is all you have experienced to come to nothing", REB.

εικῃ adv. "**in vain**" - [SO MANY THINGS] IN VAIN. Adverb of manner. "To no good purpose."

ει γε "**if it really was [for nothing]**" - IF REALLY INDEED [IN VAIN]. The construction often introduces the protasis of a conditional clause. Here, after a main clause, the construction introduces an afterthought, even a qualification, "an assumption the writer believes to be true", Burton; "of course / at any rate / I take it that."

και "-" - EVEN. Adverbial, ascensive. Bligh suggest the particle here is emphatic serving to emphasise "in vain"; "have they all been useless (ie., their experience of the Spirit), if indeed one can say 'useless' in such a case?"

v5

Paul now rounds off his argument by answering the question he posed in v2, so we may be better served if we translate the verse as a statement. "Therefore, God's gift to you of the continuous wonder-working renewal of the Spirit within you, is appropriated, not by obeying (because you obeyed) the law, but by believing the gospel".

ουν "-" - THEREFORE. Inferential, drawing a logical conclusion for the question posed in v2 (Bligh, "resumptive"?); "[so] would you say then that ...", NJB.

ὁ επιχορηγων [επιχορηγεω] pres. part. "**does God give**" - THE ONE SUPPLYING, GIVING ABUNDANTLY. The participle serves as a substantive, subject of an assumed verb to-be.

ὑμιν dat. pro. "**you**" - TO YOU [THE SPIRIT]. Dative of indirect object.

ενεργων [ενεργεω] pres. part. "**work [miracles]**" - [AND] WORKING, PERFORMING [POWERFUL ACTS]. The participle serves as a substantive, as above. The present tense is durative; "constantly working miracles", Wuest; "affects wonderworking power among you".

εν ὑμιν "**among you**" - The preposition is local, expressing space, distributive, "among you." Possibly "in you", Bligh, which would imply that the "works of power / mighty works" concern the renewal of our inner being, "the inward renewal of the Spirit", Burton, rather than miracles, eg., healings, exorcisms, ie., miraculous manifestations of the Spirit. So, instead of an expression of the eschatological powers of the age to come which, in the early church, accompanied conversion, it is more likely that Paul is referring to the gift and fruits of the Spirit, "the signs of God's continuous activity", Dumbrell, of his "sanctifying work of inner transformation [in you]", George.

εξ + gen. "**because**" - *is* FROM [WORKS OF LAW OR BY HEARING OF FAITH]? See v2 above.