

- a. Paul, in this second question, reminds the Galatians of that day when they opened their hearts to Christ and the Holy Spirit wrought the work of regeneration in them. The Holy Spirit comes in response to faith in Christ, not as a result of the keeping of ordinances. Compare Titus 3:5 and 6:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

There are those today who teach that receiving the Holy Spirit comes only after a certain stage has been reached in the Christian life. This is commonly called the "second blessing." While Paul is not seeking here to deal with this teaching, what he says to the Galatians certainly argues against this doctrine. He is speaking of the whole church when he refers to their reception of the Holy Ghost. Also, it is rather plain that those to whom he was speaking had not attained to a very high state of Christian maturity. It is clearly seen in this and other passages that we receive the Holy Spirit when we receive Christ as our Saviour.

- b. In verse 3 Paul summarizes his argument from their experience of receiving the Spirit by chiding them for reversing the order of things. Here "spirit" does not refer to the Holy Spirit because the definite article is absent. "Spirit" is the opposite of "flesh" as in Romans 8:4. "Spirit" refers to the new nature which the Christian has in contrast to the old nature which is designated by the word "flesh." This new life principle is a result of receiving the Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Galatians had started out in their Christian lives living according to this new principle, through the power of the Holy Spirit which indwelt them. In turning aside from the Gospel of grace they were turning back to the old principle, the flesh.

3. Their experience of suffering persecution (Galatians 3:4)

"Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain."

- a. In Acts chapters 13 and 14 record is given of persecutions in Antioch (13:50), Iconium (14:2 and 5), and Lystra (14:19). Doubtless there was even more opposition than is referred to here by Luke. This persecution was the work of unbelieving Jews who rejected Christ and the Gospel of Grace. The Galatians were giving up the very thing for which they had suffered to preserve.

There is a parallel to this in Christendom today. Many godly men went to their deaths at the hands of the Romanists prior to and during the sixteenth-century Reformation. The only crime these men committed was preaching justification by faith in the crucified Son of God. As the smoke of many martyrs still rises to heaven the Protestants of our day seem to be falling all over each other in the rush to get back to Rome. We must not forget the price that was paid to free us from papal tyranny.

4. Their experience of witnessing miracles (Galatians 3:5)

- a. Paul speaks of these miracles in Acts 14:3 saying: "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
- b. In verses 8-10 of the same chapter Luke gives the account of the crippled man who was miraculously healed by Paul. Paul refers to these wonders as the proofs of his ministry among them and calls upon the Galatians to compare this ministry of miracles to the powerless ministry of the Judaizers.

Conclusion: Experience is sometimes referred to as the "best teacher." The Galatians had been taught much by their experiences and yet they had forgotten these lessons because they simply did not bother to think. A bit of serious reflection on what God had done in them and among them would doubtless bring them to their senses. We must all guard against a careless, thoughtless attitude which opens the door of the church to every passing prophet.