

Gal. 3:1-6; Phil. 1:3-6; The Necessity of the Spirit I. The Reception of the Spirit II. The Indwelling of the Spirit. Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how vital is the Holy Spirit? When it comes to the work of the Spirit, we often overlook or even neglect to consider His work. This evening our passage brings the centrality of the Spirit to our eyes. As we confess, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity. Being equal to the Father and the Son, with the Father and Son is to be worshiped and glorified. The Spirit is called the Lord and giver of life- who proceeds from the Father and the Son. But today we are going to focus on the specific work of the Spirit when it comes to our salvation. Again, Paul is focusing on the fact that salvation is not of works but of grace. Being saved is not because of what we do but rather it is a gift of God. So this evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ pours out the Spirit upon His church for their complete salvation. An issue arose within Reformed churches a few years back. It was called Federal Vision- now the Federal Vision theology taught that we are in the covenant by grace but we stay in the covenant by our works. In other words, we are responsible for keeping ourselves in this new relationship with God. This is a dangerous teaching as it places the responsibility for staying saved in the realm of man's work. So today we will consider the necessity of the Spirit's work in entirety of our salvation.

### **I. The Reception of the Spirit**

In our first point, we consider the reception of the Spirit. Paul starts our passage by calling the Galatians a bunch of fools. He does this in v. 1 and again in v. 3. You foolish Galatians- are you so foolish? Now the word for “fool” here is someone who does not know- someone who is mindless and without knowledge. They were slow to understand and quick to forget. They were not using their brains- they were not being logical in their conclusions. Now what was going on here- what thinking had taken root that Paul would call them mindless fools? Well, remember that Paul has been battling against the Judaizers and their works righteousness. They had come to think that their works could be part of the equation. That they could earn salvation or even stay in this state of grace by their merit or obedience. But as we have seen- and as Paul once again forcefully teaches- works of the Law cannot be the grounds of our salvation- at any point! So Paul brings them and us back to the beginning in v. 2- when did you receive the Holy Spirit? When was the beginning of your spiritual life? When were you born again- made spiritually alive? Did you receive the Spirit at the middle or end of your salvation- or at the very beginning point of your salvation? In other words, Galatians- did the Holy Spirit come upon you after you had obeyed the Law or was it earlier? When did you come to experience the Holy Spirit? When did

you see His powerful presence at work? Continuing- what event or moment in your life did the Holy Spirit fall upon you? Was the Holy Spirit someone who was invited to come into your heart when you started obeying the Law? Or was the Spirit someone who fell upon you when you heard the gospel with the ear of faith? So to put us in the proper mindset, Paul is bringing the Galatians back to the beginning of their new, spiritual life. When they were regenerated- when new, spiritual life was first received, what were they doing? Were they working or were they receiving grace? How did the Holy Spirit fall on them? Was His presence something linked to their works or to the word of grace? Was new life evident in them after they were busy doing or when they were simply hearing? Was the gift of the Spirit something that was earned or received? I hope it is becoming clear at this point- Paul is reminding the Galatians that the Holy Spirit came down upon them and was poured into their hearts when they believed the gospel with a heart of faith. Now we have to keep in mind here that the Holy Spirit is active agent in our salvation. Justification is by the Spirit and unto the Spirit! This simply means that before we can believe, the Spirit must be at work. And when we believe, we also receive the Spirit. We cannot really separate or parse out the Spirit's work from this justification. The point is this, any new life in the Christian is a product of the Spirit's presence! We could also connect this to how the Spirit works through prayer. Not only are we told to ask for the Spirit in our prayers- but the very act of prayer is a work of the Spirit within. So God is pleased to give His Spirit to those who ask- and the very act of asking for the Spirit is a work of that very same Spirit. So you do not earn or merit the Spirit's presence as v. 2 makes clear. You cannot and do not receive the Spirit by what you do. Works of the Law are not done first in order to achieve new life. So the reception of the Spirit is by grace through faith. Inclusion into the church is by the Spirit. The Spirit is not some reward you earn, but He is freely sent.

## **II. The Indwelling of the Spirit.**

But that is not the end of the Spirit's presence and work. No, having received the Spirit we continue to enjoy the indwelt and remaining presence of the Spirit. Here Paul continues in v. 3 by continuing this line of thought. It is clear that your life began by the Spirit, but what about your continued life? If we do not earn the Spirit's presence by our works at the beginning of our salvation- perhaps we can keep ourselves in this salvation after we are justified. Is it possible for us to start by grace and remain by works? Are we brought into the covenant by grace- but we are required to keep ourselves in that covenant by what we do? Having been justified by the Spirit; can we keep ourselves justified by our works? Again Paul clearly shuts the door with a firm- NO! He

shoots down that logic as foolish! If you can't save yourselves by works- do you think that you can keep yourself in that salvation by works? No, both justification and sanctification are the works of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is the Spirit's doing- we are saved by grace through faith. The beginning of our new life is all by the Spirit- a Divine work. But we are not now left alone and expected to carry on by ourselves! No, the good news of the gospel is that our God deals with both our guilt and our corruption! Let this teaching be exposed as false- wrong- foolish! You do not begin by grace and endure by works. The Holy Spirit does not start you on this path and then leave you alone- expecting you to keep it up on your own. We are not like some raft left to float downstream on our own as if holiness is a matter of course. We not like a lame man who is made to stand and then abandoned- left to stand on his own feet by his own power! Thank God that the Spirit does not forsake the work that He begins in us! NO, the way onto the path and the way down the path are all by the Spirit. As we read in Phil. 1:6- He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it! It is interesting to note that Paul uses the same word in Phil. 1:6 as he does in v. 3. Complete the work! Who finishes the task- who accomplishes our salvation? Who brings us to the end and goal? Is it us and our works that enable us to be perfected? Or is it the Spirit by whose presence and work we are perfected? Praise God that it is by the Spirit! In Him we are perfected- we are kept in the faith and we grow in holiness because He dwells within! This is the concept of preservation and sanctification.

So let's consider this continued work of the Spirit for a moment. As Paul says in v. 3- we are not perfected in the flesh by our works. We are not made perfect by our own effort- but rather sanctification is a work of the Spirit within us. The fact remains- not only is it impossible for the works of the Law to justify us- it is equally impossible for our works of the law to sanctify us! Your moral obedience cannot hold- you cannot keep yourself in the faith or on the road of holiness! Added to this, no growth in holiness- no putting to death the remaining sins- no coming alive in the image of Christ- happens on our own or by our own power! Any confidence in the flesh is a trust misplaced! The fact remains, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and empowers us to live a life of obedience. As Rom. 15:16 says, we are sanctified by the Spirit. And again in I Cor. 6:11, you were washed, you were sanctified; you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. So it is by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that we can know the truth, believe the gospel and respond with faith as we saw in our first point. It is also true that it is by the Spirit that we can grow, obey, walk and persevere in the life of faith. Now to be clear, the pursuit of holiness and the life of sanctification is one that

we are to pray for and be dedicated to. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling as Phil. 2 puts it, for it is God who works in you! Both to will and to work! So the desire and the ability to obey are spiritual realities because God is at work within us by the Spirit. We are to be holy as our God is holy. As the reformers would state it- positional holiness leads to progressive holiness. As I Thes. 4:7 says, God has called us in holiness. Or as Rom. 6:19 says, present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. So the command to obey- to grow in holiness – stands. But it is also true that any growth and obedience we find in our lives is possible only because the Holy Spirit is living within! This is good news because without the Spirit we would not have the knowledge, ability or desire to obey. So when you see growth in your spiritual life, give thanks for the Spirit's presence and power! And for the future, the presence of the Spirit is a guarantee and down payment! Your future spiritual life- being preserved in the faith- is assured because the Holy Spirit dwells within! This truth is so much better than the false gospel being proclaimed in Galatia! How terrible it would be if your preservation depended on your ability! If you alone were responsible for the perfection that is necessary! Praise God for the good news of our justification, sanctification and preservation by way of the Holy Spirit! We are brought into the covenant of grace and we stay in the covenant of grace by way of the blessed work of the Holy Spirit. So Paul asks- what comes first- your works or the Spirit? Remember that your works are the fruit of the Spirit, not the root of the Spirit.

As we close, the Holy Spirit is not a nice addition but rather necessary and vital part of our salvation. God's work is monergistic- He begins, carries out and completes His work of saving His people! Just as our salvation is not a mix of works and grace, so also the Spirit who begins His work within completes it as well. These Judaizers were blind guides- their teaching would lead only to the pit of destruction. Jesus Christ pours out the Spirit upon His church for their complete salvation. Moses does not finish what Christ began! You do not complete what the Spirit starts! Praise God that He who began a good will will be faithful to complete it in you!