

8. Learning Why We Must Grow by Faith

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live by faith. In order to live by faith, new Christians need to learn how to grow by faith. That is a very important lesson for every new Christian to learn because only as we learn to grow by faith will we experience spiritual growth. Many Christians say that living the Christian life is a struggle. That is because they are trying to live their Christian lives in their own strength instead of learning to grow by faith.

In Galatians 3:1-2, we read, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” The word that is translated “foolish” speaks of a lack of understanding. Paul had clearly explained to the Galatians as he shared the Gospel with them that Christ was crucified and that their sin had been fully paid by Christ. However, false teachers had come along and said that they had to be circumcised and keep the Jewish law in order to really be saved and grow spiritually. That was why Paul had written this letter to these Christians. This is a reminder to us that newer Christians can be easily deceived by false teachers and that is why we need to help them come to a clear understanding of books like Galatians so that they will not be deceived

Paul asked the Galatians a key question to help them understand that the teachers that had deceived them were false teachers. Paul asked them in verse 2, “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Here, we see that Paul had helped the Galatians understand that they had received the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that the Holy Spirit is the down payment and guarantee of our salvation when it says, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” The Galatians knew that they had received the Holy Spirit when they placed their faith in Christ. They had not received the Holy Spirit by following the law. In the same way, we need to help our children understand that they received the Holy Spirit at the moment that they placed their faith in Christ.

As we help our children understand that they received the Holy Spirit by faith, we can also help them to understand how we grow in the Lord. This was why Paul said in Galatians 3:3-4, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?” Here, we see that Paul helped the Galatians who had only been Christians for a short time to understand that God had worked in their lives through the Holy Spirit. He asked them what made them think they could now grow to spiritual maturity by keeping the works of the law when it was not the law that had saved them. This is the same thing that we need to help our physical and spiritual children understand.

Paul told the Galatians if they could grow to spiritual maturity by their works, they had suffered in vain for their faith in Christ. The world wants to base their spiritual life on their own works so the people of the world will not make people suffer for depending on their own works. Christ told

the disciples in John 15:18-20, “‘If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “‘A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.’” The very reason that the world hates Christians is due to the fact that we do not depend on our own works.

We want to also help our children understand exactly how Christ works in our lives. Galatians 3:5-7 says, “‘Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” Christ is the One who gave us the Holy Spirit. Christ is the one who works miracles in our lives. Christ did not give the Holy Spirit to us based on our works. He did not work miracles in our lives because of our works. He did these things because we placed our faith in Christ.

We want to help our children fully understand that the Holy Spirit is our source of power. Christ told the disciples in Luke 24:49, “‘Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” It is the Holy Spirit that causes our growth as we learn to walk by faith. Galatians 5:16 says, “‘I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see that as we learn to walk in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to have victory over the sinful desires of the flesh.

These verses also make a distinction between those who have true faith and those who have a false faith. Abraham gives us an example of an Old Testament believer that had true faith. Abraham believed God and placed his faith in what God had promised him. God put that faith of Abraham to his account as righteousness. Here in verse seven, we see that those who have faith are the true sons of Abraham. The Jews were physical descendants of Abraham. Those who have true faith are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. That is true both of those who had true faith in the time of the Old Testament and those who have true faith today. All those in the Old Testament that had true faith have eternal life. The same is true for all of us today that have true faith. We have that eternal life because of faith.

God looked forward to the fact that He was going to save the Gentiles by faith clear back at the time that He called Abraham. Galatians 3:8-9 says, “‘And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Here, we see that God told Abraham what He told him because of the fact that God was looking toward the future. God knew that it was His plan to save the Gentiles by faith. As a result, God gave the message of the Gospel to Abraham when He told Abraham that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through Abraham.

Here, we see an important reason why we also want to help our children develop a vision for the world. God promises that because of faith there will be people of all nations that will experience

eternal life. Revelation 5:9-10 says, “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’” We want to help our children learn to see the world as God sees the world. God says that He is going to develop people with faith among every group of people. It is His plan to have every tribe, tongue, people and nation represented in heaven.

In order for people of every tribe, tongue, people and nation to develop that faith, all nations must hear what Christ did to provide our salvation. As we help our children grow by faith, we want to help them develop the vision that God has for the world. The final words that Christ spoke to His disciples before He returned to heaven are recorded for us in Acts 1:8 where we read, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” As we help our children grow by faith, we will show them by our example that we are developing the same vision for the world that the Lord has for the world.

It is interesting that just after speaking of the fact that in Abraham all of the nations shall be blessed, Galatians 3:9 says, “So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” In this verse, we see that the people who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. This statement of blessing is directly related to the vision that the Lord has for the world. This indicates one reason why it is so important that we must grow by faith. Without growing by faith, no one will develop the vision that the Lord has for the world.

Growth by faith caused the early Christians to develop just such a vision for the world. Acts 8:1, 4 says, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” The apostles remained in Jerusalem but the other Christians had caught their vision for the world. Acts 11:19-21 says, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Here, we see that helping our children grow by faith will also expand their vision for the world. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children grow by faith and develop a vision for the spiritual needs of people throughout the world.