

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**A1009 – February 28, 2010 – Galatians 3:4-6 – Doctrine Of
Miracles**

Explain $E=mc^2$. Well, it's just a sentence in the English language. These are just symbols expressing grammatical relationships that man has discovered in the universe. The sentence reads, "energy equals mass times the speed of light in a vacuum squared." If you want an explanation you can ask Einstein. I'm not Einstein. Einstein had frizzy hair, I don't have frizzy hair so you know I'm not him. What he meant to say is that if we have the speed of light, c as a constant, and we have one other variable, either energy or mass, then we can solve for the other variable and give the mass-energy equivalence. For it to work the speed of light, c , has to be a constant in a vacuum. We don't know though that the speed of light is a constant. Barry Setterfield and other scientists have questioned that and their thought is that the speed of light has actually slowed down and that it used to be much faster. Russell Humphrey's has suggested time-dilation and this has to do with the speed of light in a gravitational well and whether it differs depending on other factors. I don't know the answer but I do know there's no such thing as a universal constant. No human could know a universal constant unless he was in all places at all times measuring, in this case, the speed of light. It's therefore a conjecture. The Christian position is that it is not a constant because if it is then we have to reject Christianity. Christianity says that only God is constant and if these were really constants then there could be no miracles. It may be true most of the time but it's not true all of the time. So it's just a sentence describing how God normally governs the universe. We can use it but it's not ultimate. It's subject to the word of God and we'll talk more about miracles today.

Alright, last time we worked with Gal 3 and in Gal 3 Paul said the Galatian believers were stupid, spiritually speaking. My daughter came to me after the

service and said, “Daddy, why did you use a bad word in your teaching?” And I said, “Honey, that’s what the Bible says and I can’t change the Bible.” Paul said these believers were *anoetos* which means no mind. So I don’t know what else to call believers without a mind but spiritually speaking they were without a mind. They weren’t always without a mind, they had a mind and then lost it because they rejected Bible doctrine and every time you do that you become more stupid spiritually and therefore, that’s why I used the word and today we want to see if Paul holds out any hope for their recovery.

There are certain spiritual truths that apply to both how we are justified and how we are sanctified and those truths involve grace, faith and the Spirit of God. But before we go into that we want to review. We’ve been out of Galatians for two weeks and I’m sure you’ve forgotten what we’re doing so we review, review, review. You can never get too much review.

The first thing we want to review, and we’ll make a bit of an advance here, is the outline of the book. This is just broad strokes. Chapters 1-2 we’ll call Personal - Paul’s personal defense that he is an apostle and that the gospel that he delivered to the Galatians is final. Get this, once the gospel came through the apostle to the Galatians and it was revealed in history, the gospel is final. It stands over even Paul himself and Paul can’t change it, Paul is subject to it. So this means the gospel is authoritative, it came through the apostles but it stands over the apostles and it involves both justification and sanctification. Both of those are included in the gospel as Paul is using it in this book. So section one, chapters 1-2 we title Personal. It is Paul’s personal defense. Chapters 3-4 is Doctrinal, and this is the meat of the book. Paul’s going to give us straight out of Genesis and Exodus his doctrines of justification by faith and sanctification by faith. You are justified and sanctified the same way: by faith. There are not two principles at work here, there is one principle: faith. So chapters 1-2 are Personal, chapters 3-4 are Doctrinal. And chapters 5-6 are Practical. They give us the practical outworking of the doctrine. Doctrine is always before practice. You cannot practice what you do not know or understand. And so Paul always precedes Practical application with Doctrinal explanation. So that’s your basic outline. Chapters 1-2 Personal, chapters 3-4 Doctrinal and chapters 5-6 Practical.

The second thing we want to review is that Paul wrote in three categories. Paul wrote 13 letters and Galatians is the very first one and so we’re reading

what Paul wrote when he was a younger believer. This doesn't make it any less inspired but what it does show is that Paul grew in the Christian life. We can tell Paul is a younger believer here because the themes he focuses on are basic to the Christian life. In later letters he'll focus on more advanced things. And we said you can trace Paul's spiritual growth through his writings. And we categorized Paul's writings into three stages. Stage one we called infancy and these books cover basic doctrines and how they apply to experience. Stage one consists of Gal, 1 Thess, 2 Thess, 1 Cor, 2 Cor and Rom. Stage two we called childhood and these cover intermediate doctrines; these are the kinds of books you want to study as you master the basic doctrines and begin to think more. Stage two includes Eph, Phil, Col and Phil. Stage three we called adulthood and these books are advanced doctrine. Here we find 1 Tim, Titus and 2 Tim. Those three books round out Paul's corpus and deal with the normative function of the church, what's really important, and what's really important is doctrine. Doctrine must govern experience and so in Paul's advanced years he focuses almost exclusively on doctrine and very little on experience.

Now in Galatians we are in infancy and there are two basic doctrines; justification, or how a man is made right with God, how a man born in sin at -1 status can move to +1 status with God in a legal sense. Paul says you are justified by faith and not by doing all your goodies. So stop trying to add things to faith. It's faith alone. And second, sanctification, or how does a justified person grow spiritually. Now that I'm a Christian, what next and that's the subject of the Christian life or growth and that too is by faith alone.ⁱ

Now we come to chapter 3 and you'll see Paul start to quote the OT extensively. If you want a little homework just go through chapter 3, 4 and 5 and when Paul quotes or alludes to the OT look in your margin and circle where he's quoting from. Then look at your list. I think you'll make an interesting discovery. Guess where Paul's quoting from or alluding to. What OT books? Primarily Genesis and Exodus. And what are Genesis and Exodus to the OT? They're basic to everything that follows. They're covering infant truths, baby doctrines. And so what I'm saying is that Galatians is infant doctrine and is not arbitrary. Paul says these two doctrines can be deduced from the basics of Genesis and Exodus. This is nothing new, very little is new

here. Just because it's from the NT doesn't make it new. There are some things new, but the principles are not new.

So we'll have to go back and spend some time in Genesis and Exodus. Genesis shows us Abraham and Abraham is the key example of faith and justification. Exodus shows us Moses and Moses gave them the law, he's a key to the doctrine of revelation; the Law of Moses came well after Abraham and so couldn't have had a thing to do with how he was justified.

The third thing we'll review is the background. The churches he's writing to are located in Turkey. There were four churches Paul established here. He established them on his first missionary expedition. And after this expedition he went back to Antioch. So you have these new believers in this region all by themselves. They're baby believers, so what does Satan do? He tries to wipe them out. And the strategy involved a group called Judaizers. The Judaizers were assaulting the basic doctrines of justification and sanctification. And so what is at risk here is the entire product of Paul's first missionary expedition. The entire first missionary expedition is about to be undone if Paul doesn't correct this. So Satan is on the attack trying to get these Galatian converts to a false doctrine of justification and a false doctrine of sanctification. They're saying you are justified by works of the flesh and you are sanctified by works of the flesh. And Paul says you didn't start the Christian life that way and you're not going to finish that way. There is no way, having begun by the Spirit that you're going to be matured by works of the flesh.

So let's look at Gal 3:3 and come to some basic conclusions regarding the doctrine of sanctification or spiritual growth. Once you are justified then you have entered into the spiritual life and the issue becomes spiritual growth. How do I advance to maturity as a Christian? Verse 3 says there are two possible ways a Christian can try to be matured, a wrong way and a right way. The wrong way is by the flesh or *sarx*. The *sarx* houses indwelling sin. Paul says there is nothing good that dwells in me, that is, in my *sarx*. And so if a believer walks by the flesh then he will produce the fruit of the flesh. And that won't count for spiritual growth. Second, you can walk by the Spirit because at the moment of faith in Christ you receive the Spirit of God. So this is the right way, to walk by the Spirit. But we have the option of walking either by the flesh or by the Spirit. Now to say we should walk by the Spirit sounds nice, fine Christian words that mean nothing today. Try asking a

Christian what it means to walk by the Spirit? You'll get a lot of blank stares; it's just pretty religious words, doesn't mean a thing in the world and this is because we're Greek believers and our categories of thinking are Greek so when we read this we come up with some kind of other worldly, mystical idea that the Holy Spirit is just carrying me through life, guiding me through my feelings. How many times have you heard believers saying, well, the Holy Spirit led me to do this? When they say that, if you have enough courage, just ask them how do you know it was the Holy Spirit? Well, I just know it was. And if you keep pushing you'll always come to the same conclusion. They don't have any reason other than that's what I feel and therefore what I feel becomes the Holy Spirit. And you can't question my feelings, I have good intentions, I'm sincere. And this has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in Scripture is always associated not with your feelings but with the content of the word of God. Prov 1:23, "I will pour out My Spirit on you, I will make My words known to you" (also cf 2 Sam 23:2; 2 Chron 36:22; et al.). This is Hebrew parallelism and this construction means that for God to pour out His Spirit upon you is to make His words known to you. The word of God and the Spirit of God work in tandem; you can't separate them. Never ever can you separate them and we have a lot of this business of separating the Spirit of God from the Word of God going on in Christian circles and it's all boloney. Don't buy it, it's anti-biblical. When you think about The Holy Spirit and His ministries you realize they are in direct connection with the word of God; the Holy Spirit is the revealer of the word of God, He's the teacher of the word of God and He produces His fruit in terms of the word of God. And so we have the Holy Spirit connected with the word of God, with content, not mindless contemplation of the nothingness. Therefore we can actually say something that has meaning about walking by the Spirit. To walk by the Holy Spirit means to walk according to the word of God. That's all it means, it's not some big secret, and it's really quite simple. Paul confirms this very thing in Romans 8 because in Romans 8 Paul says you can walk by the flesh or you can walk by the Spirit and then he explains exactly what he means. He says, "the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." And so the key is obviously the mind. There is no such thing as a mindless walk by the Spirit. God made you in His image and part of that image is the mind and God gave it to you to use for His glory. The Spirit works through the mind filled with God's word. Now the word for "mind" in these verses is not the normal word for mind. The normal word is *noeo* but this word is *phronema*. We want to look at the *phronema* because

this is crucial to understanding what it means to walk by the Spirit. The leading Greek lexicon says the *phronema* is “the faculty of fixing one’s mind on something,” and translates it your “way of thinking” your “mindset.” So Rom 8 is teaching there are only two ways of thinking, two basic mindsets, the mindset of the flesh, which we’ll call human view point, and the mindset of the Spirit, which we’ll call bible view point, You can have a HVP or a BVP. Those are two basic ways of thinking.

The question boils down to which mindset is dominating the way you think. This is a major issue in sanctification. What content is dominating the way you think? If BVP is dominating the way you think then you’re in tune with the Spirit of God, you’re connecting the Scriptures to your circumstances in life and utilizing the word of God to solve your problems. But if HVP is dominating the way you think then you’re thinking in terms of the world, you’re solving problems by gimmicks, you’re handling the circumstances of life with the word of man.

So the question here is what is dominating the way you think? This is why the Scriptures and content Bible teaching are crucial. We get so much flack around here about the amount of content we teach. Why can’t we have more programs? Why can’t we have this? Why can’t we have that? Isn’t there something more to the Christian life? No, frankly, there is nothing more. The Bible is the only game in town. And there is always this game to get around the Scriptures because it’s too hard to study the Scriptures. But without the Scriptures you have nothing. You haven’t got Jesus Christ without the Scriptures. Stop fooling yourself. Jesus Christ is the word of God incarnate. And you’ve got to have the Scriptures to have Christ. You’ve got to have the Scriptures to grow spiritually. There’s no substitute. And the more Scriptural content you have in your soul the more content you provide for the Holy Spirit to utilize in bringing understanding and application in life. So no, there really is nothing more than the Scriptures. And so, if you don’t exercise your volition to study the word of God then the Holy Spirit is not going to use it to solve your problems. The Holy Spirit is a gentlemen and He doesn’t operate that way. If you want to remain ignorant then the way you solve problems will be ignorant. God has given you the responsibility to study the word of God and to think. That’s not my job, that’s not your best friend’s job, that’s your job and as you study God the Holy Spirit makes these things understandable and useable. And as you go about your daily life if you’re

setting your mind on the BVP then you're walking by the Spirit and that is going to influence the decisions of the will and the produce will be the fruit of the Spirit. But if you go about your daily life setting your mind on fleshly things then that's going to influence the decisions of your will the other way and the fruit will be the fruit of the flesh. But the way of thinking, the *phronema* dominates the will. So it all comes back to what are you putting in your mind, what are you filling your imagination with, what is cycling through your thoughts, what is your way of thinking about all of life; because whatever that is it's going to govern the choices you make and that's what Paul is talking about: you walk by the flesh or you walk by the Spirit.

So, let's break this down into four parts. That way we can see the mechanics and we can manage this and gauge where we are in our spiritual growth. First, there is content, everyone is taking content into their mind. I don't know what it is. Maybe it's the TV, maybe it's the radio, maybe it's just one of your kids yak, yakking, but everyone is taking in content. So what is the content? Is it the content BVP or is it HVP? A very simple question; but only you and God can answer the question.

Second is the mind. This is the tool you use to organize the data. Your mind does something with the content. I don't know what it does with the content but it organizes it somehow according to your basic worldview. So this is how you organize the content. Everyone does this. You're just fooling yourself if you don't think that you come to the data with presupposed notions as to what is ultimate and how to interpret it. It's not enough just to be a Christian. Paul says, fine, you are a Christian, great, but your mind needs to be renewed, your way of thinking needs to change because every believer comes into the Christian life with a screwed up way of thinking. So the question here is, as step one content comes in, how are you organizing the content, what's your mind doing with the content? How are you putting the pieces together? Now this has degrees to it because it's a function of Christian growth. Obviously, you don't believe in Christ and then wake up the next day and find that God injected a biblical worldview into your head. That would be nice but that isn't what happens. It's gradual. As you take in biblical content your mind is changed. It's the principle of Rom 10:17. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So you've got to take in the word of God and as you do the way you think changes and you're able to trust over greater and greater areas.

Third is the will, the chooser, what am I going to do in this situation? What choice am I going to make? And the choices you make are heavily influenced by the way you think; by the way your mind has organized data. Some people don't think long enough to realize that they make certain choices because they think a certain way. But you simply cannot act in faith if you aren't convinced that the Bible is correct. It's just impossible. People say, I just believe, I don't understand it but I just believe it. That is nonsense. If I say something and you say, I believe it but I don't understand it that is just shallow belief and it's going to shatter when someone challenges you on it. You have to be convinced of something before you can believe, Paul said, I persuade men. Why persuade people if it's not important they understand? And understanding requires thinking. You can't make yourself believe something. You have to think about it, you have to be convinced it's true. If you're not convinced you can't believe. So, however you think influences very strongly the will and the decisions you make.

And finally, the fourth issue is the fruit that is born. And this is the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the flesh. It's what comes out of it all and the list is in Gal 5:16-23. So you can check the list and that will give you a pretty good indicator in any given situation which way of thinking is superior in your life and where you are in sanctification.

So summarizing, first we have content coming in, the input, data, what are you putting in your mind. Second we have the mind, the organization center, as data comes in how do you interpret. Third the will, the will makes its decisions on the basis of the way you think. And fourth, out of that comes fruit, either of the Spirit or the flesh.

That brings us to the end of Gal 3:3 - they had begun the spiritual life by the Spirit, they heard the word of God in the gospel and they were convinced it was true in their mind and they acted in faith, they believed, that's how they began. Now they are to be matured the same way, they are to hear the word of God, be convinced it is true in their mind and they are to act in faith, believe the word of God and that will lead to spiritual maturity.

Now to Gal 3:4. In Gal 3:4-6 Paul is going to argue that the Spirit of God has got to be the means of their spiritual growth and the argument he makes is

based on their personal experience. He's going to say you've enjoyed miracles and obviously these were done by the Holy Spirit and so if you resort to the flesh you're not going to have success. Now, that's an argument Paul can make but we can't make today because these kinds of miracles are no longer occurring and we'll make the case as we go into verse 5.

Verse 4, **Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?** Now you can go a couple of ways on this depending on the meaning of the word **suffer** in context. It's the word *pascho* and if you've heard of the paschal lamb then you know this word in association with the sufferings of Christ. But the word *pascho* doesn't necessarily mean suffering. Its base meaning is "experience." It could be a pleasant experience or a suffering experience, but the context decides. So to translate this **suffer** is to bring an interpretation to the text. Maybe they did **suffer**, we have no mention of them suffering in Acts 13-14 but maybe they did and if they suffered for Christ and Him crucified then Paul is saying all that suffering was a waste of time; you could have just gotten circumcised and submitted to the Law and avoided all the suffering. That's one possibility. The other possibility interprets in light of verse 3 and 5. In verse 3 and 5 they received the Spirit by faith and there were wonderful experiences enjoyed as the Spirit worked miracles. But those great experiences were all in vain if now they rejected the hearing with faith and resorted to circumcision and works of the Law. I think in context this interpretation is better and so it should be translated, "did you have such remarkable experiences in vain—if indeed it was in vain?" The final expression implying that there is still hope that they can recover from their desertion of the gospel to the purity of the gospel.

Verse 5, another question to wake up these believers that have become spiritual morons. **So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** The answer is obvious, the Spirit was provided and worked miracles **by hearing with faith**. But we want to answer who is the He who provides the Spirit? The nearest antecedent is Jesus Christ in v 1. He is the one who **provides...the Spirit and works the miracles**. And the participle **provides** with the definite article makes it function as a verb, and since it's in the present active indicative it's an ongoing provision that Jesus Christ is making for them. Ongoing He is providing the Spirit and ongoing He is working miracles among them.

So this does not mean that when they believed they experienced miracles and that was it, it was over. That's not what he's saying - he's saying Jesus Christ was constantly providing the Spirit and was constantly working miracles among them and you can read of one of those miracles in Acts 14 but this introduces us to the doctrine of miracles. We know there are four periods of high frequency miracles. And what we're saying is not that miracles never occur outside of these four periods, but that most miracles do occur in these four periods. They usually last for a generation or two; they start with one man and end with another man and they relate in some way to the kingdom, either the kingdom is being introduced or it is being threatened. That's a general observation of miracles when humans are involved. We're not talking about miracles where no humans are involved as intermediaries. God can do whatever He wants directly and He still does that. But here we're talking only about miracles where humans are involved as intermediaries which is what Paul is talking about in verse 5; the miracles that the Holy Spirit wrought through him during his ministry in Galatia.

Miracles in these cases are meant to authenticate. Last time I preached an error to you on purpose to see if anyone would question me. Nobody did, so we need to go over this again. Do miracles prove anything? No. They prove nothing. To see this turn to Matt 24:24. Matt 24 is the Olivet Discourse. Matthew is known for recording Jesus' discourses, so there's a lot of teaching material in the Gospel of Matthew. Mark isn't that way. Mark records Jesus' works, what Jesus did; Matthew records what Jesus taught, Jesus' words. And Matt 24 is His words on the future Tribulation. He says of that period, verse 24, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." So do great signs and wonders prove it's from God? No. False Messiah's and false prophets will do great signs and wonders and yet they mean nothing apart from orthodox teaching. They're very convincing, the elect are almost led astray, but they prove nothing. And they mean nothing because miracles are never self-authenticating. They only authenticate when the teaching is in accordance with prior revelation. Never do miracles take a higher priority than the word of God. Miracles are always secondary to the teaching of the word of God. Now turn to 2 Thess 2:5. This is also a future Tribulation context. Here's another example. It may shock you to know that miracles mean nothing in and of themselves; lots of Christians think they do, and lots

of them are led astray by false signs, that's why we show this. He says, verse 5, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶And you know what restrains him now," now the "him" there is the lawless one from the prior verses, we know him as the Anti-Christ, he's presently being restrained. "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. ⁸Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹*that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, *with all power and signs and false wonders*, ¹⁰and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." Did you see that at the end of verse 9. Can Satan do miracles? Absolutely, can Satan do miracles through individuals? Yes, he can. Satan can blow you away with his power but Satan's miraculous powers are false. How do you know they're false? Because the one doing them is not orthodox in doctrine. So don't get impressed by the miracles. Miracles are nothing unless the one doing them is an orthodox teacher. They have to be teaching in accordance with everything previously written. That's the litmus test, not the miracle, the teaching. If you want more passages that show this I give you Deut 13 and 18, the test of a prophet. But the first point on the doctrine of *miracles is that they are not authenticators in and of themselves*. In and of themselves they prove nothing. They must be accompanied by orthodox teaching. The words and the works always go together.

The second point has to do with pre-conditions for miracles. There are four of these. The first of these is that *nature must be "real" not illusion*. If nature is not real but only illusion then there would not be sufficient cause for human investigation. Hinduism says that nature is *maya*, illusion, what we see is just an 'appearance'. Christianity teaches that nature is the creation of God in Genesis 1 and is "real". It therefore nurtures an investigation of the handiwork of God which is why the first scientists in the modern sense of the word were all Christians. They were studying nature because they believed it was real and it was the handiwork of God. Second, *nature must have "value."* If man is to consider it worthy of his time and effort to investigate nature it must have value. The problem for paganism is that it has no Creator outside of nature to impute absolute value. Any value that might be imputed to nature is subjective and limited to the individual and cannot be universalized

or absolutized. The God of Scripture imputes value to His creation in Gen 1:31. God saw all that He had made and it was “very good”. Being therefore of “good value” it is worth man’s time and energy to investigate and study both man and nature. Third, *nature must be “ordered” and “predictable”* to be studied. If everything is chaos then no patterns of nature could be observed and man could have no lasting knowledge of nature. Nor would he be able to detect miracles. If no observable patterns can be seen in nature then there is no backdrop to recognize a miracle. The God of the Bible provides this in that He is rational; therefore the creation He has made reflects His rationality and order. Therefore, predictions are possible. Fourth, *nature’s order must be discoverable by the human mind*. If there is no correspondence between the human mind and the world outside the human mind then nature’s order cannot be discovered. This problem has been a thorn for philosophic materialists since there is no reason why the human mind ‘ought’ to correspond to anything outside the human mind. The God of the Bible provides for this correspondence in that God created man in His own image so that man has the rational faculties necessary to discover the order of nature outside of himself. Further, the God who created man also created nature outside of man. That there is a correspondence between the two is clear in Gen 2 when man is commanded to name the animals. In doing this he was exercising his capacity to classify the world outside of himself; to categorize things, name them. Thus, nature is discoverable by the human mind. Only Christianity provides these four requirements which are foundational for miracles.

Third point of the doctrine, let’s define a miracle. This has been done, unfortunately in a sloppy manner. People have said God is interfering with natural law, and that has generated criticism from atheists and skeptics. There are three words in Scripture that are associated with miracles; signs, miracles and wonders (Acts 2:22). Each looks at a different aspect of a miracle. The word used for “miracles” is *dunamis*. It points to the source of the miracle; it is an act or display of divine power. The second word is “wonder”, it’s the Greek *teras* and points to the response it is intended to invoke among the onlookers, it produces “wonder”. The third word is “sign,” it’s the Greek word *semeion* and it indicates the purpose of the miracle; each miracle is a sign pointing to something beyond it. So a miracle is a visible display of God’s power that invokes wonder among the onlookers and points to something beyond it. Therefore *a miracle is God’s governance of His*

universe in a way that is different from His usual way of governance and produces wonder among the viewers. In the case that it is done through human beings it is meant to authenticate the human being as a prophet or apostle.

The fourth point of the doctrine of miracles is that when you're in a high-frequency period they gradually fade out. We're interested in the third period of high-frequency miracles so turn to Heb 2:3-4. Hebrews was written late in the NT period, AD67 and by this time the nation of Israel had been witnessed to, witnessed to, witnessed to and witnessed to until they were almost at the time of judgment, AD70. Whoever wrote the book of Hebrews it is addressed to the second generation group of Jews. If a Jew was say 30 years old in 30 AD then how old would he be now? He'd be almost 70 and so by that time there would be newer, younger people that had become Christians. So the epistle to the Hebrews was written for that second generation of Jewish believers. And notice what the author of Hebrews says in vv 3-4 to that second generation of Jewish believers, "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, *it was confirmed* to us by those *who heard*, ⁴God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." The main verb is there in verse 3, "it was confirmed" and that's an aorist tense, that's a past completed action, it's not being confirmed, "it was confirmed." And notice that the author of Hebrews is including himself as one from the second generation of Jewish believers that did not witness this directly; he was not a first generation Jewish believer, so that alone proves to you Paul did not write Hebrews. It's simply impossible from these verses because Paul was a first generation believer, he did do signs and miracles, whoever wrote this did not. He had to have first generation believer's come along and confirm it to him. He deliberately excludes himself because he did not hear but those who did hear confirmed it to him and other second generation believers. Continuing v 4, "God also testifying with them," that first generation, "both by signs and wonders and by various miracles..." The point is that by the second generation those signs and gifts had already begun to fade out and the second generation of Jewish believers, including the author of Hebrews did not see them, they did not witness them but they were confirmed to have taken place by those from the first generation. The year here is 67AD, so he's looking back and he's saying

that was the glorious age when signs and miracles were happening but that's already happened; it's no longer happening.

Here's a quote to the effect that there was a decrescendo of miracles in the period from 30AD~70AD. W.H. Griffith Thomas says, "...in regard to the [miraculous] gifts. They are seen to be in operation up to the end of Acts, but not afterwards, for while, for example, the gift of healing is found throughout Acts," and Acts takes you to 62AD, so up till then we have all kinds of references to miraculous things, but then he says, "we have no trace of anything of the kind afterwards; on the contrary, Epaphroditus is spoken of as dangerously ill, Timothy is given medical advice, and Trophimus is left at Miletus sick. The same contrast is seen if we take the Epistles of St. Paul written before Acts xxviii. 9. I and 2 Thess.; I and 2 Cor.; Gal.; Rom.)," what are these? These are our letters in infancy and compare them with those written during the Roman captivity...twenty-two references to tongues, and none in the latter; nine allusions to [miraculous] gifts as opposed to two; thirteen references to prophecy as a gift, with none in the latter. These facts, and more that could be adduced, seem to show that the miraculous gifts recorded in Acts were...not intended for permanent exercise in the normal conditions of the Christian Church when Christ had been rejected by Israel. When these remarkable differences between Acts and St. Paul are thus viewed historically and dispensationally, they are seen to be explicable on these grounds...When once it is realized that the Pentecostal period was transitional, and was more closely connected with the Jewish past than with the universal Christian future, everything becomes quite clear.."ii So that's our explanation for the miracles they experienced at Galatia that evidenced the Spirit as the source of our spiritual life and our spiritual growth. Do we have to see miracles to confirm this truth for us? No, as Heb 2:3-4 says the truth has already been confirmed in history and saying it has to be re-confirmed every generation is like saying God has to split the Red Sea for every generation. That's not the way it works. Once it has been confirmed in history it stands as the truth for all time. Now the issue is to remember. To remember what God has done in history.

Alright, concluding Gal 3:5, the ascended Lord Jesus Christ was providing the Spirit and working miracles through the hearing with faith. This confirmed that Paul's message was able to impart the Holy Spirit and Paul's message was consistent with prior revelation as he's about to go on and show,

verse 6 quotes Gen 15:6, verse 8 quotes Gen 12:3. If you want some homework go back and read Gen 12-17. These chapters are the background of Paul's teaching on justification and sanctification by faith.

ⁱ Now Romans is going to come a bit later, it's the last of the infancy category and it's going to build on the foundation laid by Paul in Galatians. Galatians is more basic than Romans. Romans is a definite advance. So for example, Galatians and Romans both talk about justification and sanctification, same topics, but Romans goes further and talks about indwelling sin and how that is a principle in the flesh that wars against the Spirit. So Romans builds on Galatians. But they are all infant, baby truths. Just as fundamental to a new born Christian's proper spiritual growth as milk is to a new baby's proper physical growth. So where do you think Satan is going to attack? Satan is not stupid. Satan is a brilliant creature. And he knows that little babies are vulnerable. So he loves to attack babies. What was the key strategy Satan used to destroy the Messiah? All through the OT, at the Exodus with Moses, with King Josiah and with King Herod in the NT, in all of these the strategy was the same. Destroy the Messiah at His birth; destroy him when He is most vulnerable. And so what do you find as Satan's strategy for destroying the Christian? Destroy him at his new birth. People don't realize the vulnerability of the new Christian but this is the place that Satan wants to strike and destroy. That way there's no chance for the new Christian to grow. So he strikes at basic doctrine.

This is why in the OT the assault against Scripture centers where? On Genesis, the creation-evolution controversy, issues of the global flood. Why is this the focal point of assault? Because the doctrines taught by those events are basic to everything else. Genesis is your first picture of God, man and nature. How can you make sense of anything without God, man and nature? The Fall answers to why we have suffering and evil. The Flood gives a picture of judgment and salvation and the Noachic Covenant answers to why we have stability in the universe. $E = MC^2$ and all the rest of it. The uniformity we enjoy is not absolute; Peter tells us it's finite and that only God and His word is absolute, so if you forget that you're doomed. So Genesis is basic, basic truth and you have no Christianity apart from these truths. You might as well just throw out the cross if you reject creation. The cross means nothing apart from creation. This is why I don't worry about a Christian that is a firm creationist, basically they understand the issue and the rest will fall into place in time.

Now the assault in the NT is Galatians. Why Galatians? Because again, it's basic. Satan knows new believers are vulnerable and so if he can strike at basic Christian doctrine and get believers confused on these issues then it will stunt their spiritual growth. So one he attacks the doctrine of justification by faith, he wants to foul that one up so people don't know how to get saved anymore and to get saved people wondering, am I really justified? He gets them to doubt and doubt is the opposite of faith, doubt wrecks believers, always wondering, am I really a believer or not and you can't go anywhere in the Christian life until you're sure you're really a Christian. The second doctrine he attacks is sanctification and that's how do I grow. Satan doesn't want any Christian to grow period because believers who grow up are armed with the word of God and the word of God is the Christians only offensive weapon to utilize

against him and his kingdom. So it's the last thing he wants you to have. So he tries to derail you on how to grow spiritually, get you focused on something besides the word of God, some gimmick, some secret to the Christian life that no one knew until Zondervan published it last week. It's all bologna and when he derails you here he's knocked you out.

ⁱⁱ W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, 48-49.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2010