

GALATIANS

What is a Spiritual Person?

Major Sections

- Paul challenges the Galatians with the true gospel of Jesus Christ—his biography (1-2)
- Paul argues that the true gospel creates the new, multi-ethnic family of God—his theology (3-4)
- Paul shows how this gospel transforms people by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit—his application (5-6)

The Gospel in Galatians 3:25-29

- ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Introduction

- The church needs spiritual men and women in order to avoid: the traps of legalism and moralism:
- ²Mark my words. I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all (5:2)
- The church can fulfill its purpose of reconciliation through restoration and burden-bearing:
- **6** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted (6:1)
- The church needs godly people who have the character qualities requisite for servant-leadership (cf 1 Tim 3)

What is a Spiritual Person?

- A spiritual person is an enigma. What images are conjured up?
- There is a sense in which all Christians are spiritual, since all believers have been given the Spirit of God as the down payment of our inheritance
- ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Eph 1:13-14)
- And yet we have a distinct sense that some Christians are more spiritual than others

Spirituality According to Galatians

- Paul presents the gospel as the way the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer, beginning with conversion:
- ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? (Gal 3:2)
- A spiritual person is someone who has heard the gospel, believed it, and received the promised Spirit by faith:
- ¹⁴He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (3:14)

Spirituality According to Galatians

- But being spiritual does not end with receiving the Spirit
- Paul commands believers to “walk by the Spirit” (5:16), “live by the Spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit” (v. 25)
- A spiritual person is one who bears the fruit of the Spirit:
- ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (5:22-23)

Practical Spirituality

- The practical basis of a spiritual life is found in Gal 5:26:
- ²⁶ Let us not become conceited (boastful), provoking and envying each other.
- Paul has been clarifying the gospel message, while at the same time confronting the Judaizers. "Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised" (Gal 6:12)
- In other words, Paul identifies the spiritual person as one who does not find his or her value or identity through comparison to others

Practical Spirituality

- According to Gal 5:26, the Spirit-led person doesn't become boastful through an attitude of superiority or inferiority
- In Christian community, spirituality is not a matter of climbing the corporate ladder by comparing ourselves to others to see where we stand
- There are people who are contentious because they have an inflated ego or confidence. They tend to look at others as not having achieved their level of spirituality—and are therefore willing to challenge others to prove it

Practical Spirituality

- Conversely, there are those who “envy” others because they have what they don’t have. They tend to look at others as having achieved something that they couldn’t do
- Yet both of these attitudes lead to what Paul warned against in Gal 5:19-21:
- ¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Conclusions

- It's no wonder that Paul instructs the spiritual ones to restore those caught in sin
- Someone with an attitude of **superiority** will boast by being critical of others or putting them down
- Someone with an attitude of **inferiority** will live in such a way as to prove something to himself or to others
- Our spirituality is never based on our human accomplishments
- Rather, our spirituality rests in the gift of the Holy Spirit given to us at salvation and is cultivated by walking by the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit to the glory of God

Discipleship Pointers

- How is the Christ-plus gospel manifested in Singapore?
- In a society built on meritocracy, the notion of grace is counter-intuitive
- If there is a weak grasp of the gospel, Christianity can easily slip into some form of moralism or legalism, where one is accepted by God by virtue of works, service, and behavior