

GALATIANS: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING LEGALISM
Part III: Identifying And Overcoming Legalism's Errant Means Of Spiritual Effort
(Galatians 3:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. Legalism can be a difficult concept to identify simply because many who hold to legalism also have such an excellent Biblical heritage. The Galatian legalists held to the **Biblical** teachings of **Moses!**
- B. However, its **means** of trying to produce spiritual wholeness will give legalism away any day! One of the most effective passages on exposing this error in legalism exists in Galatians 3:1-5!

II. Identifying And Overcoming Legalism's Errant Means Of Spiritual Effort, Galatians 3:1-5.

- A. In Galatians 3:1, Paul returns to his main concern of the drift of his Galatian converts away from the truth. We know from Galatians 1:8-9 and 5:2 that this drift was a change from believing that salvation was by **faith alone** to believing that it came by **faith plus Jewish circumcision!**
- B. Thus, Paul asked several questions about the changes that had occurred in the Galatians by **faith alone**, Gal. 3:2-5. From these questions we see four tests that expose legalism's errant means of spiritual effort:
 - 1. The Test Of The Reception Of The Holy Spirit - Paul showed the Galatians that by promoting "works" circumcision in addition to faith for salvation, they were incorrectly implying the reception of the Spirit by a human action subsequent to actual salvation, Gal. 3:2! However, the experience of the Gentiles in Cornelius' home opposes such an idea: they received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues while believing the Gospel before Peter ever finished preaching the Gospel, Acts 10:43-45! **We similarly recognize erroneous legalism in groups that urge the reception of the Holy Spirit for believers today by some conscious human effort FOLLOWING simple faith in Christ for salvation!**
 - 2. The Test Of The Inability To Improve By Works What The Spirit Began By Faith - Paul showed the Galatians that their addition of circumcision to the Gospel errantly implied that man's effort was needed after what the **Spirit** had **started FOR** the believer in salvation, v. 3! **We similarly recognize legalism's error in all groups that promote human effort to perfect or to preserve one's saved status following the salvation that was begun by the Spirit ALONE at salvation!**
 - 3. The Test Of A Consistent Testimony Of The Gospel - Paul showed that by adding Jewish circumcision to the Gospel, one discounted all of the previous suffering these same Galatians had experienced from Judaizers for standing for the Gospel truth, Gal. 3:4. It made no sense to compromise their original belief at the high price of useless persecution suffering! **We similarly recognize error in all groups that compromise the Gospel for which they FORMERLY suffered in times past to join with former opponents of the Gospel truth, and that to produce "unity" by such human effort.**
 - 4. The Test Of The Spirit's Gifting By Faith Alone In Christ - Paul showed the Galatians that by adding circumcision to faith in the Gospel that they were incorrectly implying the introduction of supernatural, spiritual gifts by human effort, Gal. 3:5! He argues that the presence of supernatural gifts in the Galatians following faith alone in the Gospel made adding circumcision to faith after salvation erroneous! **We similarly recognize error in all groups that promote any human effort subsequent to salvation in order to receive the Holy Spirit or His supernatural spiritual enablings!**

Lesson: Legalism incorrectly attempts to add HUMAN EFFORT to faith to achieve spiritual fullness instead of viewing works as the OVERFLOW of GOD-GIVEN spirituality! Thus, (1) all groups that add some human effort to faith in the Gospel as a condition to receive the Holy Spirit legalistically err! (2) All groups that promote godly living as the condition to preserve the salvation that was begun in the Spirit alone, t hereby denying eternal security, legalistically err! (3) All groups that renege on past suffering for standing for the Gospel to unify by means of such human effort with those who persecuted them for that former stand, thereby legalistically err! (4) All groups that teach post-salvation efforts to receive spiritual gifts legalistically err! THEY ERR BY MAKING HUMAN EFFORT THE FALSE MEANS TO ACHIEVE SPIRITUAL FULLNESS WHERE ONLY GOD CAN ACHIEVE IT THROUGH GRACE APART FROM HUMAN EFFORT!