

## LESSON XIII. RECEIVING THE SPIRIT BY FAITH.

September 29, 1900.

(Gal. 3:1-7 R. V.)

“O FOOLISH Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh? Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain? He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they which be of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.”

We have just had a review of the first two chapters of Galatians, but that does not mean that we have finished them, and can now take leave of them. We must remain with them, studying them from the beginning, until we have induced them to stay with us forever. The Word of God is living water, flowing from the fountain of life. If, therefore, it is in us indeed, it will flow forth spontaneously, and will not need to be pumped out. The doctrine of God is not like water that is forced up by machinery, but it drops as the rain, and distils as the dew. Deut. 32:2. In other words, it should not require an effort of memory to bring the words of God to our recollection, but they should themselves be our memory. Careful, prayerful study will enable us to absorb the sacred teaching so that it will be as much a part of our own lives as are the various experiences of the past, or the events of the present. Having thoroughly reviewed the preceding chapters, read carefully and question the verses composing this lesson again and again.

### QUESTIONS.

How does the apostle address those to whom he writes?

What question does he ask?

What is indicated by this question?

What had taken place before their eyes?

How was Jesus set forth before them?

What is therefore possible for us?

What question indicates wherein the foolishness of the Galatians consisted?

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?”

What, then, was their foolishness?

How had they begun their Christian life?

How were they now seeking perfection?

What further question is asked?

“Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain?”

What does this show as to the effect of their present course upon their previous experience?

What further question is asked concerning the supplying of the Spirit and the working of miracles?

What is the obvious answer to this question?

Is it by our works, or by our faith, that we receive the Spirit?

Since the Spirit is received by faith, how must He be retained?

Who is cited as an example of the working of faith?

What did Abraham do?

For what was his belief reckoned?

Who, therefore, are the children of Abraham?

#### NOTES.

1. The Galatians had allowed themselves to be bewitched—that is, charmed and drawn away from God; “for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” 1 Sam. 15:23. The serpent beguiled Eve, that is, he so fascinated her that she forgot God, and saw only what the tempter wished her to see,—the image which he conjured up. So the Galatians had been drawn away from the simplicity, the reality, that is in Christ. 2 Cor. 11:3.
2. The churches in Galatia had had a very real and rich Christian experience. They had known the Lord. They had seen Jesus Christ crucified before their eyes as vividly as had John, the beloved disciple. Yet Paul, who brought the Gospel to them, was not converted until years after the ascension of Jesus. This shows that it is every man’s privilege to come actually to the cross of Christ, and to see Jesus crucified for him; then he can really be crucified with Christ.
3. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3); it is evident, therefore, that no one can see Jesus crucified for him, and can receive Him, except by the Holy Spirit. Only by the Spirit can the Christian life be begun. It was “through the eternal Spirit” that Jesus offered Himself for our sins (Heb. 9:14), and it is only through the same Spirit that we receive Him.
4. The foolishness of the Galatians was in thinking that by their own efforts they could perfect a work that could be begun only by the Spirit of God. As the work is begun, even so must it be completed. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Col. 2:6. What utter foolishness for one to suppose that he is strong enough to carry a work to completion when he has not strength enough to begin it; that he can walk a thousand miles when he has not strength enough to take the first step! One who has such an idea may well be said to be bewitched. He is under a spell that deprives him of the use of his senses.
5. Let it be constantly remembered that the Galatians did not mean to give up their religion. They had not turned against the law of God, nor were they willfully rejecting Christ, although their present course was leading them unconsciously to all this. The false teachers who were perverting their souls claimed to be children of Abraham,

and were setting Abraham before them as the model man, the type of the perfect Christian. But they were misrepresenting Abraham. They were teaching that Abraham was saved because of his circumcision, instead of the truth, that Abraham received circumcision as a sign that he was saved. So the Galatians, led away by the false brethren, were seeking salvation as zealously as at the beginning, but without understanding. See Rom. 9:30-32; 10:1-3.

6. It is very evident that if the Galatians persisted in their new course, namely, that of seeking justification by their own works, all their previous experience would be rendered void. All that they had suffered (and the question of the apostle indicates that they had suffered much for the sake of Christ) would prove to have been in vain. If men leave Christ after once having accepted Him, it is the same as though they had never known Him.
7. There is obviously only one possible answer to the question asked in verse 5, and that is that the Spirit was supplied, and the miracles wrought, by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law, done by any man. The kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared to us, "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus 3:4-6.
8. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Mark the connection between verses 5 and 6. Remembering the obvious and necessary answer to the question in verse 5, we may read it thus: "He that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth it not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith;" and then in continuation of the thought we read, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Paul's Gospel work was in exact harmony with the Gospel that Abraham had. The men who were now troubling the Galatians, although "Jews by nature," and boasting of their connection with Abraham, and claiming to be his children, had nothing in common with him. Only they who are of faith are the children of Abraham. The Galatians who had been led to think that by being circumcised, and working out for themselves the righteousness of the law, they would become children of Abraham, and heirs of the promises to him, were shown by Paul that they were being led astray. From this point we have Abraham, and God's dealing with him, set before us as the example. Only as we know the truth about Abraham, can we know the truth of the Gospel. Therefore study his life closely.