

FROM START TO FINISH

Galatians 3:1-14

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The Big-Picture Truth: The Christian life begins and advances, from start to finish, by faith.

Assumption #1: Faith is not only what begins the Christian life; it is the only way to advance in the Christian life.

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. ²Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? ⁴Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? ⁵I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ. Galatians 3:1-5 (New Living Translation)

And we . . . are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (New International Version)

TIP: Give up on perfection by self-effort.

TIP: Invite the Spirit daily to show you how to please the One you love and to trust the Spirit of Jesus to change you as you do.

Assumption #2: Justification by faith alone has always been God's plan for everyone.

In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."⁷The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. Galatians 3:6-9 (NLT)

(See also Genesis 15:6; 12:3, Hebrews 11:8-10, Matthew 28:19)

TIP: Bring the blessing of God to your community by sharing the Good News. (Ask yourself: In the next couple of weeks, who can I spiritually engage with, sharing my "God story" or initiating a spiritual conversation?)

Assumption #3: Jesus Christ rescues us from the curse pronounced by the law.

But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law."¹¹So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."¹²This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life."¹³But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."¹⁴Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:10-14 (NLT)

"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." John 17:3 (English Standard Version)

"There is no need to be embarrassed by these outspoken words. They express what Scripture everywhere tells us about God in relation to sin, namely that no man can sin with impunity, for God is not a sentimental old Father Christmas, but the righteous Judge of men. Disobedience always brings us under the curse of God, and exposes us to the awful penalties of His judgment, to 'curse' meaning not to 'denounce' but actually to 'reject.' So if the blessing of God brings justification and life, the curse of God brings condemnation and death." (From The Message of Galatians by John R.W. Stott)

“At the very least, attempting to be saved by works will lead to profound anxiety and insecurity because you can never be sure that you are living up to your standards sufficiently, whatever they may be. This makes you over-sensitive to criticism, envious and intimidated by others who outshine you. It makes you nervous and timid (because you are unsure of where you stand) or else swaggering and boastful (because you are trying to convince yourself of where you stand). Either way, you live with a sense of curse and condemnation.” (From Galatians for You by Tim Keller)

TIP: Check your status with God; if you are still under the curse that brings death, lay hold of Christ personally and be rescued from that curse.

TIP: If you have placed your faith in Jesus, use this week ahead to thank Jesus that He has rescued you from the curse of the law.