

## HOW DID IT ALL START? A LESSON FROM OUR PAST Galatians 3:1-5

About the time we get to this point in our study of Galatians, some people start to get nervous.

Once I was preaching we aren't declared righteous by good works & obeying law, church leader came to me.

He commented,

“Brother, you shouldn't preach like that!

People get idea they can do what they feel like doing!”

When we start preaching salvation by trusting Christ alone & godly living based on walking *by faith*, without rules, someone tells us we're preaching a dangerous message.

Once, as I was preaching this, church received a legal size tri-fold brochure in VERY small font. 6 pages of rules we have to obey to avoid eternal condemnation!

People think if we don't include list of rules, people will do whatever they want!

After ch **3-4** defend *doctrine* of freedom in Christ;

**5-6** talks about *standards* for living.

Merrill Tenney called Gal. “Charter of Christian Liberty.”

Not teaching *libertinism*—license to do what we please!

Emphasis on salvation & walk based on *faith alone*, risks looking at just 1 side of coin

If you're not planning to stick around for rest of story, consider

=>what it looks like when Christ lives in us (2:20);

=>what Paul says about how to live in ch. 5-6.

Our standards should never *dilute* gospel!

**We're never accepted by obeying rules!**

–before, nor after we're saved!

**Law *always* ends up condemning us.**

**Law *never* makes us acceptable to God!**

**What's required to enjoy life & please God?**

...for authentic Christian to enjoy God's blessing?

*Religion* gladly provides rules to live by:

“Do this to enjoy God's blessing!”

Bible-believing churches sometimes fall into that trap!

“*Don't dance!*” “*Don't drink!*”

“*Don't smoke!*” etc.

Some have positive list, “Read Bible!” “Pray daily!”

There's nothing wrong with what they recommend;

But it's not key to enjoy spiritual life & please God!

These standards have value, & most reflect biblical ideas; we don't do them to earn points with God; be “Spiritual!”

Paul addresses false underpinnings of this idea explaining how we DO enjoy life & experience God's blessing (3-4)

**We don't become spiritual by keeping law**

Enjoying God's blessing doesn't depend on obeying *any* list of rules—no matter how biblical the list may seem

God's blessing is result of *Christ's* work, *not* our works.

**Ch 1-2:** Paul's story verifies that message:

Legalism=>re. Salvation—“I must *DO* something for God to accept me; to become part of His family.”

*Salvation's based on trusting Christ alone.*

Legalism=>re. Godly living—"I must *DO* something for God to accept me; to enjoy His blessing."

*Godly living based on trusting Christ alone.*

**Can't reconcile salvation by faith; walking by law!**

**Everything's based on faith;**

**or it's all based on law!**

**It's all grace, or it isn't grace at all!**

Our walk with God *never* based on effort/performance!

It's always based on what *Christ* has done.

**Ch 3-4: theological basis for walking by faith**

### **DEFENSE OF PAUL'S DOCTRINE 3-4**

Combines Gal experience with OT truth

Doctrinal discussion based on OT, which rulebook-toting, Judaizers claim as basis of legalistic system.

Before dealing with that, he begins with questions they all know answers to, based on their personal experience.

### **HOW DID IT ALL START?**

Begins with our experience when we received H.S. (1-5)

***How did we receive Him?***

Assumes we realize **we receive Him by faith.**

God's work in **justifying** us is basis for doctrinal issue

He *assumes* we've been justified & received H.S.

Since we **begin** Christian life by faith, how could we expect to grow spiritually & **finish** course by works?

**3 questions help us understand key issues:**

1. How could we turn from crucified Christ we trusted at beginning? (back to works?) **1** “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.”

**“Who bewitched you?”**

**–to get you to take your eyes off Jesus?**

What could convince you to turn away from that clearly-proclaimed base of trusting Christ?

He calls them “*foolish.*”

They should know better!

–Don’t show much understanding of gospel.

It’d make more sense if they’re bewitched by magical spell to distract & lead them astray.

False message they bought into goes against revelation concerning death of Christ & gospel they received.

They’d seen truth of **Christ crucified** “publicly posted” as on billboard—no 1 could miss—or misunderstand it!

**They’d seen vivid portrayal: Christ crucified**

How could they be led away from that truth?

Perhaps someone has given them “the evil eye!”

They started out well.

**What happened to them?**

How could they suddenly be confused?

Message they’re flirting with contradicts revelation of Christ’s crucifixion they received

**2. Did we start by *obeying law* or *believing what we heard*? 2 “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?”**

**Proof from reception of Holy Spirit**

All who receive eternal life receive the Spirit!

If you have Spirit, you have life!

**Acts 19:1-2**–“Did you receive the Spirit?” = critical ?

**Rom. 8:9**–“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

**Rom. 8:16**–“The Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God’s children.”

Paul has no doubt they’ve received H.S.

The question is “How?” How did you receive Him?

By trusting Christ, or by *your* efforts?

He supposes answer to question is evident.

When they received Spirit,  
something happened.

Was that based on law, or faith?

[=> 3<sup>rd</sup> doctrinal ?]

**3. Can we finish by our effort what H.S. started? 3-5**

“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? <sup>4</sup>Have you suffered so much for nothing–if it really was for nothing? <sup>5</sup>Does God give you his Spirit & work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard.”

We received Spirit by faith, not by law 2-3

If we began **by Spirit**,

how can we *walk* trusting flesh,

**trusting our efforts?**

***Start by Spirit => finish by flesh?***

Can't you see?

This takes us back to same problem?

2 systems can't coexist!

They contradict each other.

Having begun our Christian experience by trusting Him,

how can we expect to finish it by *our* effort?

**3:4** *"Have you suffered so much for nothing?"*

–Could be **negative = suffering**

Christians in Galatia suffered because of faith in Christ.

Affliction came at hands of Jews because of their faith.

How could they abandon the gospel & acknowledge that suffering they went through was for nothing?

–Could be **positive**

=>*Haven't you learned anything from your **experience?***

**Either way,**

going back to law makes no sense! =>

**Trying to earn it gets us nowhere!**

***So where does all their experience lead?***

All God has done for us,

what was it based on?

There's no question God's at work in us (5)

Supernatural work is obvious. Question's "How?"  
 Was it based on law,  
 or on faith in Christ?  
 Is God working because we try so hard to be good?  
 Or, is God working because we're trusting Jesus?  
 Abraham: 6 "Consider Abraham: *'He believed God, & it was credited to him as righteousness'*"

**God will finish what He started!**

**If He started by faith;**

**He'll finish by faith!**

**So what does all this say to us?**

How did we start our walk with Christ?

If we started by faith,

how should we walk now?

**Andrew Murray:** I'm often asked by young Christians: 'Why do I fail so? I vowed with my whole heart, & desired to serve God; why have I failed?' To such I always give 1 answer: 'You are trying to do in *your* strength what Christ alone can do in you' This perfecting in the flesh what was begun in Spirit runs far deeper through us than we knew."

***Do we get it—yet?!!***

**We can't get into heaven**

**by obeying rules.**

**We can't enjoy godly living**

**by obeying rules!**

**We must trust Christ**

to receive eternal life!

...trust Christ

to enjoy walking with God!

*It's about trusting Him; start to finish!*

What are **WE** trusting?

Our efforts, our performance,  
or **Jesus**?