

GALATIANS 3:1-14

1. How would you define the word “believe?”

The Galatians' idea of undergoing circumcision to make themselves truly acceptable to God filled Paul with dismay! That Old Testament rite was a required mark for Abraham's family and nation, and served as a reminder of God's power and goodness. But it was also part of an agreement that bound those who bore it to full obedience to God. (Like so many of the old rituals, it pointed ahead—to the transforming inner work Christ would do in all who *believe*.)

Paul urgently desires to untangle his friends from the plausible-sounding but deadly advice they'd encountered. In chapters one and two, he's been using his own amazing 'faith history' to make truth clear again. Now he turns from his story to theirs, to underscore his message.

- * **Begin with prayer**: “Lord, You alone truly know my heart and all my needs. Please open Your marvelous Word to me and teach me all that You have for me today.”
- * **Review your memory verses** by reading them aloud (Galatians 1:3-5, 2:15-16.)
- * **Begin memorizing** Galatians 2:20.
- * **Note** where Paul directed their attention in Galatians 2:15-21.
- * **Read** Galatians 3:1-14.

Remember the Message: Galatians 2:21-3:1.

2. How does Paul sum up his last paragraph, in Galatians 2:21b?
3. In 3:1, Paul takes his friends back to when the gospel first came to them. Tell how that is described (3:1b) and note any observations you may have.
4. If we've begun, like the Galatians, to think God's love and acceptance are things we can and must earn, we must return to the foot of the Cross. What are we shown there? Romans 5:6-8 and I John 4:10.

(To dig deeper see also Ephesians 2:1, 4-5.)

The gospel—the message of the Cross—is all about our utter weakness and His overruling grace and love. This was once so clear and so freeing to the Galatian believers. No wonder Paul reacted the way he did, as chapter 3 opened!

Remember Your Experience: Galatians 3:2-5. After hearing the gospel...

5. Paul's questions in verses 2 and 5 remind them of what occurred next, from two different viewpoints. What main facts does he emphasize in these verses?

A long-promised new era had come. The Spirit of Christ was *poured out* immediately on all who believed, bringing with Him the very life and righteousness of God. In those early days, this was often marked by miracles, to *confirm* true salvation and the Apostles' words. Apparently, the Galatians had personally seen or experienced these displays of Divine presence and power. (verse 5)

6. Ephesians 1:13-15 and Galatians 2:20 describe their new reality (and ours).
 - a. Consider these verses carefully and comment on phrases/ideas that stand out to you.

b. Notice that this new life is *entered* by faith and then also *lived* by _____ .

7. What do you think Paul means in his central question: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (*human effort* NIV)

* He's still miraculously at work: What are one or two changes the Spirit of Christ has brought about in and for you, since you believed? (Some may be miracles in progress...)

* How does that encourage you in today's circumstances?

Remember Abraham: Galatians 3:6-9. Contrary to Paul's teaching and the Galatians' own experience, some Jewish believers said, *Just believing isn't enough. You must be "made Jewish," circumcised, to be accepted by God.* This earned them the name *Judaizers*. So Paul brings out his big gun, their revered ancestor Abraham. (Scan Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 15:1-6.)

8. Speaking of the great patriarch of all Jews, Paul tells of an event that occurred *long before the Law or the rite of circumcision were given*. In Galatians 3:6:
 - a. What did Abraham "do," and what happened next?

- b. What does it mean to have something *credited, reckoned* or *accounted to* you?
 - c. Do you see any ritual or any work of Abraham mentioned?
9. According to verse 7, who are Abraham’s children, “just like him,” with perfect righteousness credited to their account by God? (Note the word “are!”)

Imagine the Judaizers are reading this over the shoulders of the Galatian Christians...

10. Paul says God’s plan is foretold in Abraham’s story. Who have always been on God’s heart? (verse 8) Who are to be included on equal footing in His blessed family? (verse 9)

*Personal: Did you know that these prophetic Scriptures had you in mind? If you have believed God—put your faith in His Son—write out verse 6, putting in your own name.

(Note: Paul later went into much more detail about Abraham and circumcision in Romans 4.)

Remember the Cost: Galatians 3:10-14. (Paul cites passages in Deuteronomy and Habakkuk.)

11. a. What two alternative ways to justification before God are presented in verses 10-11?
- b. From verse 10, why is relying on observing the law always a hopeless venture? (A big clue lies in the word “everything” in the NIV—or “all” in the NAS.)
12. When we can’t meet its perfect demands, the law condemns us as _____.
(verse 10) (*A judicial term: a just, righteous God must hand down this penalty, rejecting all evil from His holy, life-giving presence.*)

In Matthew’s gospel (chapters 5 and 22) Jesus said keeping the law meant not only fulfilling all its outer behaviors and rituals, but having perfect inner purity as well. He added, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart..all your soul..all your mind..and love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commands.* Galatians 3:10 and 12 imply doing all this, always. No wonder 3:11 says, *Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law!*

13. In the face of this reality, the Father and the Son had a plan, from all eternity. What did our perfect Lord Jesus Christ do, according to verse 13?

14. The meaning behind these words is awesome and overwhelming. From the following Scriptures, tell what it meant for the Son to become a curse for us:
Isaiah 53:4-6

Mark 15:25, 33-39; John 19:28-30

II Corinthians 5:21

The old hymn puts it this way:

*Man of Sorrows, what a name – for the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim: Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood; Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Guilty, vile and helpless we; spotless Lamb of God was He;
“Full atonement!” can it be? Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Lifted up was He to die; “It is finished” was His cry;
Now in heav’n exalted high: Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*When He comes, our glorious King; all His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we’ll sing: Hallelujah! what a Savior!
P. P. Bliss*

15. When anyone insists they must add to the Cross some works of their own to gain salvation, what are they saying about our Lord’s sacrifice?
16. a. Why were the Father and the Son willing to pay this terrible price for you—what desires and purposes do you see in Galatians 3:14?
- b. Once again in this verse, just one response is mentioned, linking you eternally into God’s rich blessing and promise: faith in Christ. Is He worthy of this?
17. Think back over the reassuring truths you’ve seen in Galatians 3:1-14, which begins and ends with the Cross. How do you want to respond?