

# How To Have A Sustained Faith

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2024

GALATIANS 3:1-5

Let me start by saying this. The Christian faith is a simple thing. You might wonder why the Bible is so long and...well, complicated? The Bible you see has an ability to speak anyone wherever they are, whatever their circumstance, whoever they have become. It is we who are complicated, the Christian faith is a simple thing. And it all starts with a simple Gospel.

To enjoy a faith that can be sustained through any circumstance, any challenge, any trial, you and I must remember, daily, the simplicity that is in Christ. And that is precisely where we start off with Paul today in Galatians 3:1,

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Paul up until this point in the book has held a very reasonable, concerned , tone about his words and having made a clear, simple, and logical case for living in the gospel of grace rather than 'another gospel', he is now speaking to their hearts. **Today, Christian, God wants to speak to your heart...are you listening?**

Who has got inside your head? Who has fooled you? Why have you wandered from obeying the truth? Why have you become so religious and bound up in rules and interpretations. Paul points to the one thing they have wandered from. It is simple. It is short. It is the gospel. And it goes like this 'Jesus Christ [...] crucified.

Paul was driven by the simplicity of the gospel and so should we be. His words from 1 Corinthians 2:2,

For I determined not to know anything among you except **Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

And that drive to proclaim the simple gospel of Jesus Christ turned ancient Corinth on its head, and he refused to deviate from that simplicity – ever!

➤ So let's get to the heart of the matter in verse 2,

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

A very brief inquiry consisting of **one question**, and one that would serve this generation and this church perfectly well. Did God's Spirit bring you to life and make your body His home because you kept all the rules; because you were good enough? Or did He do it because you **heard** of 'Jesus Christ crucified' and you **believed** on Jesus Christ crucified? Because you **heard, faith** erupted from within and you **took hold** of God's mercy like it was your only hope?!

➤ He's not done yet. Keep listening to verse 3,

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Are you for real? You threw yourself on God's mercy and in words something like that of blind Bartimaeus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The most likely cause in any human heart that would tempt us away from this simple cry for salvation is pride. **Are you too proud to admit that's where it all started? Perhaps all that is keeping you from coming to the crucified Jesus Christ is pride in your heart, that says, "no, that's too simple a gospel, I need to do something!"**

We saw only last Sunday in Romans 8:3 that the law could never be a roadmap for us to earn our salvation because it relies on the flesh to keep it all and your flesh is weak – it is guaranteed to fail...thank God!!

➤ Next question from Paul goes like this in verse 4,


Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Let's be clear. Christian suffering does not come to us because we are religious but because we have taken the name of Jesus Christ. If you end up marginalised because they call you religious that is not the suffering Paul is speaking of. He is talking of those times when we refuse to deny the name of Jesus Christ and suffer; when they hate us because they hate Him. As Jesus Christ said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you..." (John 15:18)

➤ We will finish up in verse 5 where Paul repeats the question of verse 2 and just widens the context so we think about this on an even deeper level,

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Let's think about the depth of this question. As a believer in Jesus Christ crucified, He has given you His Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who has encouraged you when you were downhearted, brought Scriptures to memory when you were lost for words, pointed out the sin you thought God would never notice, given you gifts so you could serve Him as He has called you to, prayed prayers for you with language you couldn't find, brought comfort when you had given up hope, helped you in more ways than you can number, and He sanctifies you to become more like Christ...and more.

 Why, asks Paul, does God supply His Spirit so generously? Is it because you have done such an awesome job at doing all the things you are supposed to do as a Christian, or is it because you **heard**...and you **believed**?

Then he asks about the miracles God works among you, those times of supernatural interference in the normal way things happen round here. The accident you escaped, the surgery you survived, the things He has given you at no cost when you couldn't afford them, the times He has changed the weather, when He has brought newborn lives into your families, when He has made a way where there was no way. All those miracles, are they because you have done such an awesome job at doing all the things you are supposed to do as a Christian, or is it because you **heard**...and you **believed**?

 In Zechariah 4:6 an angel speaks to the prophet,

So he answered and said to me:

“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel:

‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’

Says the Lord of hosts.

Time and time again God acts for His people not on account of their efforts, or faithfulness, or even their passion for His name but because they heard the gospel and they believed. God spoke and they believed.

This is the only way we can come to Christ, this is the only way we can stay in Christ and this is certainly the only way we can become like Christ.



## Getting SIMPLE...

1. Stop trying, go back to trusting.
2. Not about showing off blessings but showing off the simplicity of Jesus Christ crucified.
3. Serve others to serve Him (not to be seen).
4. Smash the idols of honour, respect, and effort.
5. Kick the doubts (I could never, I will never become...)
6. REST (in Jesus Christ crucified)