

Life Verse: A Close Encounter “It’s Christ”

Galatians 2:19 – 3:14 (NRSV)

A. Paul’s Letters:

- Some are to bring encouragement and comfort.
(To the Thessalonians)
“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” – 1 Thess. 1:2-4 (NRSV)
- Others are to bring instruction. (To the Ephesians)
“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.” – Eph. 1:17-19 (NRSV)
- While others are to bring warning. (To the Galatians)
“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.” – Galatians 1:6 (NRSV)

B. What’s wrong in Galatia?

- They stopped thinking clearly.
“You foolish Galatians!” – Gal. 3:1a (NRSV)
- They started giving in to a false gospel.
“Who has bewitched you?” – Gal. 3:1b (NRSV)
- They started trying in their own strength again instead of continuing to trust God.
“It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publically exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?” – Gal. 3:1c-2 (NRSV)

C. When we try instead of trust...

- The impossible remains impossible.
“Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?” – Gal. 3:5 (The Message)

- We empty our account of God’s righteousness, and pick our own back up.
“Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.” – Gal. 3:6-7 (NRSV)
- We trade Christ’s blessing for sin’s curse.
“...Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.” – Gal. 3:10b (NRSV)

D. What the Law is and is not:

- It was a system of regulations for God’s people, literally hundreds of instructions/commands for living. This compilation is found in the first five books of the Bible. (Trying to please God.)
- It reveals the problem – our sin.
“In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, ‘You must not covet.’ But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.” – Romans 7:7b-8 (NLT)
- It’s not the solution.
“Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, ‘Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.’”

E. The Solution – It’s not a balanced scale... it’s Christ!

- I can’t redeem myself, **BUT CHRIST** redeems me through the cross!
- I can’t keep the law (I’m cursed), **BUT CHRIST** became the curse for me!
- I can’t thrive on my own, **BUT CHRIST** blesses me and promises the Holy Spirit.
“Christ redeemed us for the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” – Gal. 3:13-14 (NRSV)

“Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself. Do you remember the Scripture that says, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”? That is what happened when Jesus was nailed to the cross: He became a curse, and at the same time dissolved the curse. And

now, because of that, the air is cleared and we can see that Abraham’s blessing is present and available for non-Jews, too. We are all able to receive God’s life, his Spirit, in and with us by believing—just the way Abraham received it.” – Gal. 3:13-14 (The Message)

F. I avoid getting a Galatian letter by...

- Staying connected to my source of power... the Holy Spirit (prayer & God’s Word).
“Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” – Gal. 3:3 (NRSV)
- Constantly evaluating what’s influencing me (relationships, media, social media, etc.).
“And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.” – Gal. 2:20b-21 (NRSV)
- Remembering Who’s saving me – It’s Christ!
“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” – Gal. 2:19b-20a (NRSV)

“And now we begin to see what it is that the New Testament is always talking about. It talks about Christians “being born again”; it talks about them “putting on Christ”; about Christ “being formed in us”; about our coming to “have the mind of Christ.”

Put right out of your head the idea that these are only fancy ways of saying that Christians are to read what Christ said and try to carry it out – as a man may read what Plato or Marx said and try to carry it out. They mean something much more than that. They mean that a real Person, Christ, here and now, in that very room where you are saying your prayers, is doing things to you. It is not a question of a good man who died two thousand years ago. It is a living Man, still as much a man as you, and still as much God as He was when He created the world, really coming and interfering with your very self; killing the old natural self in you and replacing it with the kind of self He has. At first, only for moments. Then for longer periods. Finally, if all goes well, turning you permanently into a different sort of thing; into a new little Christ, a being which, in its own small way, has the same kind of life as God; which shares in His power, joy, knowledge and eternity.” – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*