

# Galatians 3:1-14

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's great to be gathered together with you, and I ask if you have your Bibles to turn with me to the book of Galatians. Galatians chapter 3. Galatians chapter 3.

We've been making our way through the book of Galatians, and we've been looking at it the last several weeks. And as we introduced it, and we saw this writing, it's so much different than the last writings of Paul, which we looked at together as a church, and that would be the book of Romans. And that Galatians differs very, really, very clearly from Romans, and that Paul was writing to the church at Rome, to a church that did not know him personally, a church that he did not start, a church that he had no part or portion in beginning, because he intended to go to Rome. And one of the great, small, humorous things you find in Scripture is that by the time Paul landed in Rome, the church at Rome greeted him. And Paul's intention was to always take the gospel to Rome and beyond, but by the time he got there, God had already ensured the gospel had made it there.

We don't know who started the church at Rome. We just know that by the time Paul gets there, he gets there as a prisoner, that the church is thriving, and they come as far, the book of Acts tells us, about 60 miles away from the city center, and meet Paul and escort him back, and he hangs out with the believers.

[ 1 : 14 ] But when Paul is writing the book of Romans itself, he is writing to a church he did not know, but he had heard about. And he is writing encouraging the church onto the foundations of the faith. He is writing about, if you claim Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then this is the things you need to understand.

And it was a big rocks issue. When he writes to the church at Galatia, the book of Galatians, he is writing to a church he is very familiar with, because he started this church. He began this church. The Lord used him to, what we would call, plant this church.

And not only to plant it, but to raise up the elders or the leaders of this church. And also understanding that when we speak of church, we're not just talking about one location, one building, one body.

It would have been multiple churches, meaning in multiple homes, more than likely. Multiple small groups, if you will, planted throughout the region of Galatia. Galatia is either defined as a city or a region.

Many believe it was probably a region, even though there was a city inside that region, which would have been the whole Asian region there. And there would have been multiple churches, which Paul was used of the Lord to begin the work there.

[ 2 : 20 ] And he raised up the elders or the pastors and the teachers there. And now he is writing to the church to correct a wrong. So rather than Romans writing just to encourage them in a truth, he is writing the book of Galatians to defend the truth.

Because once Paul was used of the Lord to do this great work in Galatia, much like everywhere else, God moved him and he went somewhere else. And after the Lord moved him, there's another Lord with a capital, there's the big capital Lord, Lord Jesus Christ, and then there's a lowercase I, Lord, that is the Lord of this earth, who moves in quite often behind the kingdom work and begins his own small kingdom work.

That would be Satan. He came in behind through people and began to disrupt the fellowship of the church and began to look at these things. So we see here Paul defending the gospel in the book of Galatians.

And that's what we've been looking at, how Paul is defending the truthfulness. Again, another big rock issue, you have to have the gospel rights. You have to have it sincere and you have to have it true.

And Paul is defending the truthfulness of the gospel with the church at Galatia. So this morning we're in Galatians chapter 3, verses 1 through 14. And I'm really excited about where we're going to be at this morning.

[ 3 : 38 ] Last week we looked at living the crucified life, found in Galatians 2, 20 and 21. We focus on a large section of scripture, verses 11 through 21, and we lived how really we have to live crucified.

But this morning it is such a great passage. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you would join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God, found in Galatians 3, starting in verse 1 and going down to verse 14.

Paul writes here, You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you.

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?

So then does he who provide you with the Spirit and works miracles among you do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Even so, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

[ 4 : 45 ] Therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed in you.

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things, written in the book of the law to perform them.

Now that no one is justified by the law before God, it is evident, for the righteous man shall live by faith. However, the law is not of faith. On the contrary, he who practices them shall live by them.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become 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 would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we thank you for your word. And Lord, we thank you for what a privilege it is to read it and to hear it. And Lord, we pray now that we would be able to see it clearly, that our eyes would be open, our ears would be open, our hearts and our minds would be attentive to what it is you're saying to us.

[ 6 : 03 ] And Lord, we pray that we would understand it not just as fact, but Lord, as application and truth for our life to be lived out for your glory. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated.

We have a very clear passage here of Paul continuing to defend the truthfulness of the gospel. And some say that Paul, in his first half, asked six questions, and then he gives six Old Testament references to answer those six questions.

And I know, much like some of the writing of Paul, this seems very confusing to us when we read it in short excerpts or we read just parts and portions of it. And that's why we always want to frame a text in context.

We want to keep it for what it is. We don't want to just take bits and pieces of Scripture and see it and kind of try to figure it out. We want to see how it fits into the big picture of all things.

And if there is a passage really that fits into the big picture, not just of the book of Galatians and not just of the New Testament, but of the entirety of Scripture, it would be Galatians 3, verses 1 through 14.

[ 7 : 02 ] And it really is a subject which we love to talk about. It is something that we promote and we really may not even know we promote it. It is something that we adhere to very clearly. And it is the defense of the gospel by personal experience.

You may remember that I shared with you that some have said the greatest apologetic for the gospel is love. That is, the greatest defense that you can give for the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord is the love that we express to others.

But the one that we love to point to the most is personal experience. This is why we refer to our personal Savior or the personal leading or what Jesus has done for me.

How I have received Christ and how I did this. And none of those things are inherently bad, but we've looked at the reality that in Scripture there is no such thing as a personal Savior. He is just the Savior. There is no such thing as personal faith. It is just the faith. But Paul here is doing what is natural to mankind, and that is pointing to what happened in the individual's life to defend the truth of the gospel.

[ 8 : 09 ] When we interact with one another and we're sharing the good news, that is all gospel means, that is the good news. And when we're sharing Jesus Christ with people around us, we do not have to be theologians.

We do not have to know every great fact that the Bible contains, because none of us will ever know that. We do not have to have Scripture memorization better than anyone else, because one of my weak points is Scripture memorization.

I'm just really bad at memorizing verses. Now, I can tell you what it says, and I can tell you vaguely where it says, enough that we can go dig it up and read it for what it says, right? I'm more of that kind of guy.

I familiarize myself with the Bible so that I can open up the Bible rather than trusting my own memory. But I have met individuals that have had huge portions of the Scripture memorized, and just enough to kind of really humble me and shame me.

And then I realize, well, the Lord gave them that ability. He didn't give it to me, but that doesn't mean that I shouldn't strive for it. But anyway, we talk to people, and we're like, well, I don't know this, and I don't know that. And the greatest encouragement is just share your story, right?

[ 9 : 13 ] Just share what Christ has done in your life. Share the reality of it. Because the Bible tells us that when we bow our knee and we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, that something radical happens inside of us, that we are born again.

Jesus says, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. And every time there is a birth, something miraculous happens. We've got babies waiting to be born.

And when those babies in this congregation are born, guess what? People are going to know about it, right? And we're going to see the difference. Some family dynamics are going to change, amen? Some things are going to happen. There's going to be a big difference where sleep at night used to be sweet.

Now sleep at night is going to be, you know, gone. And all those wonderful things, how things change, and how amazing it is, and how you can never be prepared for the change that's going to happen, no matter how much people tell you.

But when it does happen, you can't quit talking about it. And that's what it is in our walk of faith, that when I came to Christ, my life looked so radically different. Things that used to be normal are not normal anymore, and things that used to fit in don't fit in anymore, and the things that I used to do I can't do.

[ 10 : 21 ] And all of a sudden, I can speak about how I have experienced Christ. That's the most natural form of witnessing, we would say, or the most natural form of evangelization.

We'd have to always tie that. Now Paul, using what is natural to man, is writing back to the church to defend them. Here's the problem the church had. Paul came in and he preached, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

And you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you put faith in Christ. And he did that, and they accepted it. And this was a Gentile church, non-Jewish church, and they were rejoicing in that.

And shortly after Paul left, evidently, some people came in and said, oh, well, that's great, but now you need to be circumcised. And now you need to make sure you observe the Sabbath. And now you need to make sure you only eat kosher foods.

And now you need to make sure that you do it this way and that way. And they began to put regulations and rules and the list of do's and don'ts on the church. I'm wearing a tie this morning, and I don't know that that was a good idea.

[ 11 : 22 ] And they came in, and Paul writes to them. Now, Paul, you've got to love the boldness of Paul, right? He's writing to the church and says, you foolish Galatians.

He's writing to the church. He said, who has bewitched you? Who has tricked you? Who has traded something that was so great for something that is so worthless?

And what he is trying to do here, and what he is pointing at in the whole book, is defending the fact that they don't have to follow a list of rules and regulations. It's just faith in Jesus Christ, which is enough.

And he's defending it. He'll defend it in a number of ways, starting here. He introduced that to us in chapters 1 and 2. But starting in chapter 3, really 3, 4, 5, he gives this number of defenses.

And the first defense he gives is a defense of personal experience. He says, if you want to know if that's all you need, look at yourself. Look in the mirror.

[12:26] And let me ask you, how did it happen with you? So as we look at this matter of the defense of personal experience, I want you to see just a number of things, and I'll make it as quick as I can, but they're really good things that you don't need to miss.

So don't check out on me on any of them. Sometimes I say, well, if you're only going to listen to one point, listen to this one. But don't do that to any of them, okay? You have to listen to all of them. So I'll highlight them for you because we love to talk about our personal experience.

We love to talk about our Savior, and we should. We love to talk about our experience, how this came. So we need to understand, if our experience can defend the truthfulness of the gospel, we need to make sure we have these right.

Number one, I want you to see the foundation for personal experience. The foundation for personal experience. What is that? Whatever you are resting your personal experience on will determine whether or not it will defend the faith.

Hear me on that again. Whatever foundation you're resting your personal experience on determines whether or not it defends the true gospel.

[13:32] Because everyone has a personal experience. Everyone. Everyone. The satanic worshipers have goosebumps and personal experiences.

People that are on the total opposite end of the spectrum from Christianity have experiences that are real, that are valid, that really happened to them. They really felt it, and they love to talk about it. But it is the foundation of the personal experience that determines the effectiveness of its defense for the gospel. So I want to ask you, when you talk about Jesus Christ, or if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, what are you basing that on?

Because the foundation is important. You say, well, Pastor, I was in an event one time, and someone asked me to raise my hand. And I was here one time, and I said a prayer.

Or I was here one time, and I did this. Or I was here one time, and I want to get beyond that. Why did you say the prayer? Why did you raise the hand? Why did you make the decision?

[14:40] What was the foundational issue for the faith which you claim to possess? And I'll show you what the Galatians was, because Paul was there, right?

Paul saw it. Look at what he says. He says, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Here it is. Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. When Paul went to the region of Galatia, and he began to preach Jesus Christ, Paul did not preach heaven is great, hell is bad.

Paul did not preach, if you want your life to be buttercups and roses, accept Jesus Christ. Paul did not preach, if life is going to be better, if you want your best life now, just say this prayer, and you'll have your best life now.

Paul did not go and say, if you want all your problems and all your concerns and all your worries to pass away, accept Jesus Christ now. And the reason he didn't is because Paul was persecuted, he was suffered, he was shipwrecked, he was hungry.

[15:43] Paul was not living his best life now, right? The problems which Paul possessed grew significantly when he accepted Christ than they were prior to his conversion.

So when Paul preached Jesus Christ to the Galatians, he preached Jesus Christ crucified. And when they placed faith in Jesus Christ, they were placing faith in Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried, laid in the grave, three days later, raised to live with newness of life.

That was the foundation of their faith. Now the question that begs to be asked, and it is something that whenever Carrie and I worked with the youth, I asked them all the time, what are you resting your faith on?

Do you have faith in Jesus Christ because you want to go to heaven and you don't want to go to hell? Well, that's wanting the gift without having any desire for the giver. Do you want Jesus because you're in the midst of problems and you want these problems to go away?

And you just say, well, nothing else has fixed my problems, so maybe Jesus will fix my problems. That's not scripture, my friend. That's not the gospel. The times get tough all of a sudden and everything started going downhill, so you decided that since I have tried everything, I better try this Jesus thing, and I'm going to begin to give Jesus my life.

[17:03] Now, God can use circumstances and tragedies. He did it in my own life. God can use problems and He can use all those things to wake us up, but that shouldn't be the reason we have faith.

Listen, the gospel is this. The Son of God, God Himself took on flesh, became man, lived a sinless, perfect life, and took my penalty on His back and died on the cross for me.

My faith in Jesus Christ is not because He's going to make life better. It's because He took my bad away. And Paul says, when you put your faith in Christ, you are resting that on Jesus Christ crucified.

The faith that really defends the gospel, the experience that really defends the gospel, is the experience that says this, All I know is that I have done so much bad, I deserve to die, and Jesus died in my place.

Anything other than that, it's not only just the cherry on top, it's the Cool Whip and the cherry, it's the ice cream, it's everything you put on top. All I know, thank you, Brother Johnny, loving that Cool Whip too.

[18:13] Thank you, Brother. All I know is that I deserve to die. He died in my place, and now I live because He lives. And that's enough. Because, see, when I place my faith on that foundation, if life doesn't get better, it's okay, because I still deserve to die, but I don't have to.

If everything falls apart, it's okay. Because Jesus didn't say, hey, come to me, and I'll make everything great. He says, come to me, all you who are weary, what? And take on my yoke, for my burden is light.

But He didn't say, there wouldn't be a burden. He just said, He'll help you carry the burden. Right?

That's what He said. You say, whoa, whoa, whoa, I meant, Pastor. In the Bible there, it says that we're to bear one another's burdens. Right. It does say that, but it also says, carry your own load. In the same verse of Scripture, it says, bear one another's burdens, and that is, when you have a rock too big to carry, I need to come under that rock and help you carry it. I'm not taking it away from you. I'm going to help you carry it. But it is not my responsibility to carry your lunch sack.

And that's literally how that reads. You carry your own lunch, and I'll help you carry the boulder. And I'm going to carry my own lunch. Right? Bear one another's burdens, and carry your own load. And we understand this fact. It doesn't say that Christianity is going to be easy.

[19:23] That's why we always had this thing of putting on the armor of God. You don't put armor on when you're going to go put your feet up in the recliner. You just don't. That stuff's uncomfortable. You don't get ready to be a defender of something when there's not a problem to defend.

The foundation of a faith or a foundation of a personal experience that defends the gospel is this. I don't know anything else besides Jesus Christ crucified. And that's enough.

So here's the foundation of that personal experience. Number two, we not only see the foundation of personal experience, we see the verification of personal experience. And this one is so critical because we need to understand this.

Can you verify if someone knows Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior? Now, we're treading on dangerous ground here, but I want you to stay with me because our tendency is to say, well, I mean, that's their, you know, faith is personal and I can't see if they have faith and I can't tell if they have, you know, if they've really responded to the gospel and I can't do that.

And it's not for me to judge. And we quote the scripture, the most often quoted scripture in all of the Bible right now is do not judge. And that's fine. But we need to, again, take it in context because when the author of scripture wrote do not judge, it says you don't deserve to be the judge of the world because God's already the judge of the world.

[20:45] You can't judge the world. But Paul says, I have nothing to do with judging the world because that's God's business and he sits on that throne. I can't sit on that throne. But Paul says, but I do judge the church.

That gets uncomfortable real quick, right? Why? Because God has given us grounds to verify personal experiences. If someone comes to me, some of you yesterday were going through the

community and you knocked on the door and someone said, they met an individual who said, well, God told me this and God told me that.

And you say, well, it's not for me to judge. If God told you something, wait a minute, my friend, it is because now we're bringing God into the equation and the scripture tells us we have a very clear cut formula to verify someone's personal experience.

If someone comes to me and said, hey, I know Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I have a way of verifying it and so do you. Your personal experience can be verified. Look at what the scripture says. You say, well, I need to see this.

Paul says in verse 2, this is the only thing I want to find out from you. Did you receive the Spirit? It has a capital S, right? Or it should because that's the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, by the hearing of faith?

[ 21 : 51 ] And now let's go on. Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit? Are you now being perfected by the flesh? And then we go down, verse 5, so then does he who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

And then go down to verse 14, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. I hope you get the point here that Paul is writing a whole lot about the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because the Holy Spirit is the verification to your personal experience. Jesus said that if I go to the Father and you come to me, I will send you the Spirit.

And no one possesses the Spirit unless he is one with the Father. We understand this. The verification of someone's personal experience is the presence of the Holy Spirit in that individual's life.

And I'm not just talking about goosebumps. I'm not talking about feelings. I'm not talking about weird stuff. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, kindness, and self-control. And we have all of these things.

[ 22 : 53 ] And I pray that over Braden and he's like, Daddy, what does kindness mean? And that's easy. Daddy, what does self-control mean? And that one's real easy. You know when you want to push that kid down the playground and you don't do it? That's self-control. That's what that is, right?

And we do all those things. And sometimes I'll be praying with him at night and I'll forget. He'll be like, Daddy, you forgot self-control. Yeah, we need to go back. Let's tag that back on. Lord, we need some self-control. We all do.

And that's in there, right? That's the fruit of the Spirit. The Scripture tells us that there's a fruit of the flesh, those things, those immoralities, those carousing, doing all those things, those anger, those outbursts of anger, the defiled speech, all those things.

And then there's a fruit of the Spirit that is when these things are present in your life, then they will look like this, right? Why does the Scripture tell us that? Because if we begin to see the fruit of an apple tree, if we see apples laying on the ground, we got two assumptions.

Either one, somebody dropped their Kroger sack or there's an apple tree somewhere around, right? When we walk around and see apples all over the place, we start looking for the tree. Why?

Because fruit comes from a source.

[ 23 : 51 ] Fruit comes from a place. If we see peaches, we got to look for a peach tree. So when all of a sudden in our life, we begin to see love where there used to not be love. We begin to see joy when there was never any joy. Then there's peace, patience, kindness.

What a minute. Now we're kind to one of the gentleness, self-control. We begin to see these things in our life or in the life of others when they can't naturally be there because that's not the fruit of the flesh.

Now all of a sudden, we need to be looking to see where the Spirit's planted. And it testifies to the reality of the personal experience, which means that if I come to you and I tell you I had an experience with God, I know Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

Here it is. And you look at my life and you don't see the fruit. Then guess what? I don't care what kind of experience I had. It cannot be verified by Scripture.

Cannot. This is important. Because Satan doesn't prowl around wearing red, having horns coming out of his head, got a spiked tail and carrying a pitchfork.

[ 25 : 02 ] When he was created, he was the angel of light, the most beautiful angel in all of God's creation. And I've seen a lot of God's creation that I think is magnificent. And when Scripture says he was the most beautiful of all of God's creation, then he must be striking.

And one of the greatest ways that he leads men astray is not just through an out-and-out lie, but kind of by a really good experience that's completely wrong.

He's deceptive. And this is why the Scripture says that your personal experience can be verified. Is the Holy Spirit present in your life?

If he is, then you can look at someone else and say, you know what? You know who I used to be? Now let me tell you who I am. And you tell me there's no God. You tell me Jesus didn't die for me because I know what I would have done in the flesh.

I know what I would have done naturally. I know who I used to be. And my experience can be verified because that's not me. That's the presence of the Holy Spirit in me. And the Holy Spirit doesn't hang out with unredeemed, unregenerate sinners.

[ 26 : 12 ] He only hangs out with the redeemed, forgiven sinners, right? He still hangs out with sinners, but it's the redeemed, forgiven ones, much like me and you. He doesn't hang out with the lost. He hangs out with the saved. That's what Scripture tells us.

He only is present in the life of the forgiven and the redeemed and the ones who have truly had an experience with Jesus Christ. So when I can point to the Spirit's presence and activity in my life, then I can point to the reality that the personal experience I have had is authentic.

Paul asked the question, said, when he came to you, did he come to you because you did something good or did he come to you because you believed in the good? He came to you because you believed the truth. And the answer to that is rhetoric.

We see that. Now, number three, not only do we see the foundation for the personal experience, we see the verification of the personal experience. And here we go. Now, stay with me again. You can't check out on any of these, okay?

Number three, and I'm making my way quick, the evaluation of personal experiences. Paul would write and he'd say to, you know, test yourselves, to try yourselves. And he'd say, Lord, look at me and help me to make sure that I am in the faith.

[ 27 : 15 ] Paul says, I look at my own life, make sure I'm in the faith, right? He says, I evaluate every experience I have. I was speaking with a brother last night. I said, you know, I've ever become a part of Scripture or a portion of Scripture and I'm reading the Scripture and all of a sudden I feel like God is showing me something he's never shown anyone else, right?

I'm seeing something new. I said, if I'm reading a portion of Scripture and I come to a conclusion from that Scripture that no one else has ever saw this interpretation the way I see it, then more than likely I'm wrong.

because for hundreds of years very wise men have been studying God's Word and if I come to an interpretation no one else has ever seen, I need to evaluate my interpretation based upon the experiences of others.

And I need to see that and in your life, in your faith, it is your job to evaluate your personal experience. Wouldn't you love to make sure Satan wants you to doubt your salvation, Satan wants you to doubt your forgiveness, Satan wants you to doubt your experiences, he wants you to walk around thinking, well, I hope I'm okay, maybe I'm okay, surely I'm okay, Satan loves that, he has a heyday with I think, I hope, and maybe, because it's when those times that you don't think you're okay he can get you to do something.

And then he has you kind of caught between two and you're tossed here and there like the waves of the sea, James says. But the Scripture says that you are to know that you know that you know. you are to walk in confidence, you are to walk in boldness.

[ 28 : 44 ] I mean, I'm to the point sometimes in my own mentality, if I'm going to be wrong, at least I'm going to be confidently wrong, right? I'm just going to walk with my head held high and if I'm going to mess up, I'm going to mess up to the best of my abilities thinking I'm wrong.

And when I find out I'm right, I need to repent of those ways. But I'm always going to evaluate my personal experiences. But now here is the ticket.

Do not evaluate your experiences with the people you want to choose to evaluate it by. What do you mean? I can always find someone else whose experience will make what I think is right, right. I can always pick and choose who I want to evaluate myself by. Well, you know, according to this person or according to that person or according to this person, I want to challenge you. Evaluate your personal experiences by those examples that the Bible sets forth.

You know why God included so many messed up people throughout his scripture? Well, number one is because all people were messed up. So if he was going to include anybody in there, it had to

be full of messed up people. Right, just, it's just the way it is.

[ 29 : 54 ] Other than Jesus Christ, the only one that's never messed up, never was defiled, never fallen short. If the scripture was not going to be full of messed up people, then it could never have the story of anyone. It just couldn't.

But I believe, number two, God sets them there because these are the people he wants us to evaluate our experiences by. And this is exactly what Paul does here.

Paul says, in case you think I'm wrong, in case you think I'm wrong that the foundation you believed was Jesus Christ crucified, and in case you think I'm wrong that you have the testimony of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, and I love how when Paul writes that, he says, he who gave you the Holy Spirit and works miracles in your life.

You know why I love that? I'm kind of a side note, in my other Bible I have that underlined, is because the presence of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of miraculous activity. You say, well I'm not seeing any miraculous activity.

The fact that he's present is miraculous. And I've never seen anything God does that wasn't miraculous. We just get so accustomed to it, we call it ordinary.

[ 31 : 01 ] temporary. I mean, it's amazing, right? How God works and how God moves. And so he says he does miracles around you or among you because he's present.

So Paul says, in case you think I'm wrong, let's evaluate your personal experience with the examples we have in scripture. And he goes to the greatest of all time examples, he goes to Abraham.

And he really went to Abraham because the Jewish people would point back to Abraham and say, see, Abraham was given this law, this rules of do's and don'ts, and you need to follow the rules of do's and don'ts that Abraham was given.

Paul says, well let's go beyond that. Let's go all the way back to the beginning of Abraham and let's see where Abraham started. Okay, let's look at the experience of Abraham. Here's the question Paul puts before them.

How did Abraham, a man who grew up in really the founding city of idolatry, he was from Ur, the land of the Chaldeans where idolatry was founded, right?

[ 31 : 58 ] History shows us that. How did Abraham, who grew up a very paganistic, idolatrous worshipping individual, how did that man get on the right standing with a holy God?

And however Abraham did it, it's probably good enough for me to do it. That's the experience we're going to evaluate ourselves by. He's going all the way back. And here Paul writes for us, he's going to evaluate that in verse 6.

Beginning to answer these questions, here, the evaluation, and he does it in one sentence and it's so striking and we like it here in the South because it says a word, especially in the New American Standard that we like to say and that's reckon, right?

He says here in verse 6, even so Abraham believed God. You see that? This is scripture by the way. If it is set in a different font set in your Bible it's because it is a quotation from an Old Testament verse.

He quotes several Old Testament passages here and this is one of them. This is the first of them. Even so, here it is, here's the experience, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

[ 33 : 01 ] The word literally means counted or put it to his account. He was accounted, he was credited righteousness. Now, based on Abraham's experience, let's evaluate our experience with Abraham.

How did an idolatrous, paganistic individual get in a right standing with holy to God? Now, right standing means righteousness. How did he do it? The scripture says Abraham believed. Doesn't say anything else, right?

Abraham believed God and God said, that's great and gave him righteousness. All Abraham did was believe. You say, well, but there's all these laws and all these rules. No, Abraham believed the promise that God gave him.

God looked at him and said, out of you I'll raise up a seed and in your seed that all the descendants of the earth will be blessed and I'll do all this and it says, if you go back to that Genesis passage, Abraham believed God and God accounted it to him as righteousness.

All he did was believe the promise God gave him. That's it. He didn't believe the promise and do the work. He didn't believe the promise and offer up his son. He didn't believe the promise.

[ 33 : 59 ] You say, he offered up his son right after he was already counted righteous. He did the work after the righteousness was already put into his account and the righteousness is what made him right with God.

He wasn't right with God because he offered up his son as an offering. He wasn't right with God because he did all this great stuff. He wasn't right with God. He did all that stuff because he was right with God. You see the difference and when we have a personal experience and say, well, I want to make sure I'm right with God and this is how I have come about it.

This is the experience I've had. We want to base or we want to evaluate that experience on the experience of others and Paul says, look at Abraham. All Abraham did was believe God.

And you say, well, there's all this other stuff. There's all these other examples I can pull up in scripture and you can and we can pull them up from Genesis to Revelations and what we find is a very similar experience. Paul himself here was a very similar experience.

I met the Lord on Damascus Road. What did he do? I believed him and I believed him. I was counted in his righteousness. Then I began to do this other stuff and it's this belief and this faith that we have in the promise that God has extended.

[ 35 : 08 ] And by the way, the God that we worship is the same God that Abraham worshiped and the promise that Abraham believed was the promise of a coming seed, singular, not of multiple seeds, plural, and that seed is Jesus Christ.

He believed that God was going to send Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ all the world was going to be blessed. That's all he did. He believed it. And God says, you're righteous. And we have the same thing today. Are you believing in Jesus Christ?

I'm not asking, do you believe in Jesus and do this? Do you believe in Jesus and do that? I'm not asking you to do that. The simple question is, do you believe the promise of God that in Jesus Christ you will be forgiven? He died in your place.

He paid your price. And in Jesus Christ you have eternal life in heaven. Do you believe the promise? You say, yes. In my personal experience I believe. Good. Enough said. Sealed. We're done. Now there are things you will do because you believe that because if you don't do those things I will challenge whether or not you really believe that.

Because words are thrown around very lightly but words carry a lot of weight. We like to say things to get people off our back but if we really, really mean what we say then we will do things in response to what we say, right?

[ 36 : 16 ] And we see this, this belief being laid out, this evaluation because it says, therefore, verse seven, therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Those who are of faith, not those who are of blood but those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And then we come down to verse 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

There's the evaluation of your personal experience. Now, we've seen defending the faith with our personal experience and the only way we can do that is if our personal experience rests upon a sure foundation.

The only way we can do that is if that foundation passed the verification process, there's the presence of the Holy Spirit. And once we have verified our personal experience, we evaluate it in light of how God has dealt with other individuals.

You say, why should I do that because God does not change? He's the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, which means the way he worked with Abraham is the way he's going to work with people all throughout history. God does not change.

[ 37 : 20 ] He is the same. So we have no problem evaluating ourselves with credible witnesses, and those credible witnesses are found in Scripture. And we see that. Which, by the way, we also have experiences of people who tried to earn God's favor and fell short because you cannot earn the favor of God or buy the favor of God.

Now, I've got one more for you, and I promise I'm done. I know I'm a little long winded this morning, but I've got one more for you, and you got to hear this one because it is just as equally important, and it is the temptation of personal experience.

We have three positives and one negative. So, just don't want you to leave here on a negative note. Understand the three positives before we have the one negative, okay? The temptation.

Knowing all of these things, that in your personal experience, you can rest on a sure foundation.

That is Jesus Christ crucified. You can verify your personal experience knowing that the Holy Spirit came to you because of faith, not because of anything you did.

You believed God, and now all of a sudden the Holy Spirit is present in your life doing things you never would. You can verify that. You can verify it in the life of others, but first you need to verify it in your own life. You can evaluate your experience with a holy God based on the experiences of other people in Scripture with a holy God.

[ 38 : 35 ] And you can know the truth of all that. The question still begs to be asked, why then with all of that proof would we ever go back and be what Paul calls here foolish?

Why would we ever begin to think there's something we must do when that's not the foundation, that's not the verification, that's not what we find out from the evaluation?

What is the temptation that leads us to go back to thinking we must do something? Even after we know all these other great truths, why do we think, well, that all sounds good in theory, Pastor, but I need to be sure that I do this, do this, do that.

We start adding to it this weight that God never wants us to have. Why is that? And the answer to that question is in that first word, because it's a personal experience.

The temptation is this, when we begin to speak of our experience with Jesus Christ, and we begin to speak of our faith, and we begin to speak of our salvation, naturally, we love, well, I'm going to say this, it's going to sound cold, but I don't want to say this, self-loves self.

[ 39 : 52 ] I hear some people sometimes on television, and I hear some people talking sometimes, and not speaking in particular about anyone in here, I look at Karen, I say, he loves a lot of himself.

We love to talk about what we have done, we love to talk about how we have worked, we love to talk about, that is just the nature of self. Self loves to magnify, especially in America, I mean, let's just do it, it's American individuality, where we promote most of the places of the world, when you go anywhere else, the culture or the group is always more important than the individual.

This is why we don't understand in major portions of the world, individuals will sacrifice themselves for the group, because in large sections of the world, the group is greater than the individual. In America, sadly, the individual is more important than the group.

That's just the culture we've risen up to, that the most important person in the room is me. And I'm going to take care of me, and I'm going to do me, you do you, and I'll leave you alone, you leave me alone.

Well, when we talk about salvation, that tendency, that culture begins to rise up, and the temptation is this, trying to promote ourselves. True biblical salvation cannot promote self because we didn't do anything for it.

[ 41 : 15 ] true biblical salvation cannot promote anything we did because we don't deserve any of it. True biblical salvation really does nothing other than diminish self.

Listen, I was wicked, I was bad, I was awful, I did this, and we don't like to open up all of our luggage, right? We don't want everyone seeing all the bad things we've all done. We've all got a past.

We've all got a present. We're all messed up. We all have problems. We all fall short, and we don't really, we would love to act like we don't, but we do. But the reason salvation is so hard to talk about is because when we do that, we're opening ourselves up saying, let me tell you who I am.

Now let me tell you what he did. Because if you really want to defend the faith, you have to get real ugly about yourself. Because people who see others who have it all together say, well, that's easy for you because you got it all together.

You don't know how messed up I am. And I love to say, but you don't know how messed up I am.

Let me tell you how I'm messed up. Let me tell you how I've fallen short. Let me tell you how I did all this stuff, and in spite of all this, Jesus Christ died for me, and if he'll die for me, he'll die for you, right?

[ 42 : 24 ] The reason we have such a hard time using personal experience to defend our faith is because we don't want to talk about ourselves the way the Bible does. All of our righteousness is like filthy rags.

Even the good stuff we do stinks in the sight of God. All of our works are useless. Everything we've ever tried to do is vain. It's nothing of ourselves lest any man shall boast.

It's all of Jesus Christ. And the temptation of personal experience is to begin to make it more of you and make it more of me instead of making it all of him. Oh, I trust Jesus, and...

Or I'm a member here, and... Or I'm there every time the doors are open, and... Great! I love that you're here. You being here is not going to make you any more a son or a daughter of the kingdom of heaven than if you weren't here.

I love that you're here because I love hanging out with people. I think it's a great family gathering. We can come and we can disagree and still get along. I love that you're here because it's awesome hanging out with people who aren't just like me.

[ 43 : 29 ] I wish there was more people different from me here. I love that. I love the fellowship. I love being encouraged, but the fact that I'm here is nothing to earn me to be there, right?

It is what Jesus Christ has done for me. I'm here because he's already put me there. And there's a big difference. And that personal experience, and you say, well, what do you mean?

And look at what it says. I'm going to look at it in Scripture. It says in verse 10, For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse of the law, for it is written, cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them.

Now, you need to see this really clear here. Because if you think as long as your good outweighs the bad, you're okay. That's a good thing. I've heard that. I don't know how many times I've heard that. Well, I do more good than I do bad, so surely God will forgive me.

Look at what it says. The Bible says those who are of the law must abide by what? There's a little three-letter word in there that is so scary. All. A-L-L.

[ 44 : 25 ] All the law. The standard of God is, not that your good outweighs the bad, it's that you have no bad on the other side of that. You've done it all. The law says if you're going to live by the law, you better do all the law, because if you fall short in one point of the law, you're guilty of all the law, and the punishment due to anyone of the law is the same.

If you say, well, I'm going to work my way there, and I'm just going to try to do more good than I do bad, and you've already messed up. You've already went contrary to Scripture. You've got to live by all of it, and until you can tell me you're living by all of it, then you cannot tell me anything about your life.

I don't really care. I can tell you there are some things I do really good. There are some things naturally God has wired me according to the law that I'm okay, but I dare not brag about those things I do good.

Why? Because there are some things I do real bad, and the fact that I do anything real bad makes me guilty of even the things I'm doing good. I can't live by all of it. I can't. So I'm guilty of all of it. As far as I'm concerned, when I read the book of Leviticus, I wouldn't get past the fifth chapter. I need to be stoned and dead. You break this law, you're stoned. You do this, you're stoned. You do this, you're stoned.

[ 45 : 31 ] You talk back to your parents, you're stoned. You do this, you're stoned. I mean, I was like, wow, I would be dead by the fifth chapter of the book of Leviticus. Under a big pile of rocks. And for that matter, I'm not trying to be mean.

Everybody I know would be too. I just want to know who's going to stone me because nobody's going to be around. You just ain't been caught yet. Right? So we see that. I can't keep all of it. So I dare not try to live by any of it, and I need to just trust and live it out. Now look, it says in verse 12, here's a testimony. By the way, this is a great Old Testament prophecy, and I'm wrapping up. I promise. We're getting hungry. However, the law is not of faith. On the contrary, he who practices them shall what? Live by them. So you have to hang on every word of it. You have to live by it. Verse 11 tells us the righteous man shall live by what? Faith. My friend, you're only living by faith, which means you can't talk to me about yourself, or you're living by law, which means we can talk about everything we do right and wrong.

[ 46 : 29 ] There's the temptation. The temptation is, I'd love to talk about what I do good. The reality is, even my good stuff's not good enough. What I deserve is to be cursed.

Verse 13, I'm wrapping up. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. That is, the curse of death. For the wages of sin is death according to the law. Having become a curse from us, how to do that, he became our cursed.

Because it says, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. When they nailed him on that cross, he took my curse on himself. So when I talk about the life I live and I talk about my personal experience, I cannot tell you how good I am without telling you how bad I am.

And I must tell you how bad I am so that I can tell you about how great he is. And we have to avoid the temptation of personal experience. It leads us to talk more of ourself than it does of our Savior. All of us have good qualities. Every one of us. Every one of us have things that we do good. But unfortunately, we all have bad qualities.

[ 47 : 42 ] But here's the good news. No matter how good, no matter how bad, no matter how much we work, the personal experience can be founded on the one who did it all.

And that is Jesus Christ. So, Lord, may when I talk of my personal experience, may it be of the experience of Christ and not of the testimony of myself.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much for this day. God, I know a lot's been said. I know a lot's been put out there. Lord, we trust by the power and presence of your spirit that you would help us to understand it.

You would help us to apply it. Lord, the truth of the gospel will be defended by the experiences of our life. What a joy it is, O Lord, to know it's not of us, it's all of you.

We praise you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[ 49 : 04 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.