

Galatians 3:6-9

"By Faith & Of Faith" (Acts 2)

"What I experience *with/from* God forms what I believe *about* God." How many of you can sense the faulty logic in that sentence? Yet it's astounding how many people today allow *experience* to be the driving factor behind what they believe or what they will validate as being from God.

"Hey man, I *know* such & such to be legit because I experienced it myself." Well here's the problem w/arguing from experience. Experience is *subjective*, meaning that it's based primarily off of personal opinion or perception, it argues from *feeling*. But how *you* feel about something, & how *someone else* feels about something may be completely *different*. What *you* thought was an incredible experience from God, someone else may have thought that it was the weirdest, most uncomfortable thing they've ever been apart of that couldn't possibly have been God. So who's right, & how do I know?

You see; *subjective experience* must always be balanced w/*objective evidence*. Something that is *subjective* is based primarily off of feeling, something that's *objective* is based off of *fact*. Experience can change, but truth never does therefore I should *always* be able to back up what happens in my life spiritually/experientially w/what I can find scripturally/contextually. ...

Too often people will allow their experience to validate the bible when in reality the appropriate course of action is that the bible is to validate our experience. They won't discount their experience if it's not in the bible; they discount the bible if it doesn't validate their experience. Therefore people fall into all these strange winds of doctrine, they start barking like dogs, or laughing uncontrollably, or they'll hiss & writhe around on the floor like snakes & claim that these are manifestations of the Holy Spirit even though those things find absolutely zero credence in the bible.

You're familiar w/the scripture, there they were (Acts Ch 2) it was the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit falls, divided tongues of fire fall upon the disciples, they begin to speak w/other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance of the wonderful works of God so that the people who were witness were hearing the praises of God in their own native tongue. You read that & you think, "Well that's different!"☺ But listen, different doesn't mean wrong does it? Now there's no indication that things were out of control, or disorderly or any other out of line kind of thing. But people were becoming confused, they couldn't clearly discern the situation & so Peter stands up to bring some illumination/clarification to the situation.

He says, "Some critics are accusing us of drinking, being all out of control, couldn't be further from the truth." Look at **Vs 16-21**

Here's the point, he was able to support their subjective experience w/objective truth. Such should always be the case. What happened in Acts 2 was different; God's not in a box, but He'll never operate outside the parameters of His written word. So if we can't validate the experience w/rightly divided biblical evidence, we dismiss the experience.

Why am I saying all this? Thus far throughout the book of Galatians Paul has been pointing to personal experience (be it his or theirs). "This is how salvation happened in *my* life, this is how salvation happened in *your* life, we've experienced the Person & power of the Holy Spirit in our lives by grace through faith in J.C. alone." **But now he balances what's happened in them personally/experientially w/evidence of this same principle scripturally. So we're seeing the subjective experience of these Galatian believers brought into balance w/the objective teaching of the unchanging truth of the Word of God. Let's back up & get a running start at today's text beginning in Vs 2.**

Vs 2-9

What was the personal experience? Salvation by grace through faith, (God accrediting them w/His righteousness through simple faith in J.C.). What is the biblical evidence that validated that experience? Vs 6 "just as *Abraham*, 'believed God & it was accounted to *him* for righteousness."

Paul reaches all the way back into the book of beginnings (Gen 15) to illustrate from the life of the primary patriarch of the nation of Israel, Abraham. He's in essence saying, "Hey guys, righteousness has been by grace through faith since the beginning! Going all the way back to the origins of the nation of Israel even to Abraham himself." Of course he could've gone even farther back & shared from the lives of Cain & Abel, or Enoch, or Noah, but he selected Abraham because he was the father of the nation of Israel, the one whom the Jews placed their pride (as we'll see in a moment).

Now to refresh your memory let's remember that the argument was that faith in Jesus was good, but it wasn't enough to save you, wasn't enough to make you right in the sight of God. You also needed to be circumcised, you needed to keep the law, (today it would be equivalent to saying things like, "faith in Jesus is great, but you aren't saved until you're baptized, & you need to get rid of your TV, & never go to a movie, say these prayers & read your bible this much..." you get the idea).

So Paul reaches back all the way to Abraham, who lived over 400 yrs before the law was given & was declared righteous more than a decade before the covenant sign of circumcision was ever put in place. The question is, upon what basis than was he made right in the sight of God?

Listen, don't complicate the issue, keep it simple, we read it right here in Vs 6, quoting from Genesis 15:6. Remember the scene? God brought Abraham outside his tent one night & said, "Look up at the stars, you can't count them all can you? That's the way your descendants will be." The interesting thing is that when God told him that, he was an old man who didn't have any kids. & We read that Abraham "*believed* God, & it was accounted to him for righteousness." He hadn't done any great deed, didn't vow to drive the speed limit or never go to a movie, there wasn't a rule or ritual he performed... Abraham believed the promise of God's word, & God accounted to him His righteousness on that simple premise.

Now listen, it wasn't that Abraham believed *in* God (though he did & that's obviously important). It's that He *believed God*, that is, He believed God's word, His promise to him. Martin Luther said, "Faith says to God, 'I believe what You say.'" Why make that distinction (believing *in* God Vs believing God)? Because there are all kinds of people who say that they believe in God (that is they believe He exists), but they don't *believe God*. They don't really believe His word, His promise to them. When God says, "*...call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*"¹ They don't believe it. When Jesus says, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*"² They don't believe it. When He says, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*"³ They don't believe it. When the scripture says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,*"⁴ They don't believe it... You see, there's a big difference between, "I believe in God" & *believing God*.

Faith *believes God* for the promise of His word. God says, "Believe on the Lord J.C. & I will forgive you of all your sin, I will debit your account of sin & I will credit your account w/My righteousness." Faith will say, "God I believe you & I trust in the Lord J.C. & His work upon the cross to gain me acceptance in Your sight."

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Je 29:12-13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 3:16-17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 11:25-26]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ac 16:31]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Listen, there are essentially 2 types of righteousness. Accomplished righteousness, & accounted righteousness. The problem is that the righteousness you can accomplish can never be perfect (which [btw] is the standard God demands) because sin was present the moment you were conceived. You might say that we all come flawed from the factory. So if sin is present in me I can never yield something perfectly holy or righteous. Translation? I can't *accomplish* a perfect righteousness; therefore I need God's righteousness *accounted* to me. How do I do that? Just like Abraham did, believe God.

Vs 7

Vs 6 is Paul's observation, Vs 7 is his application. Abraham *believed* God & it was accounted to him for righteousness, *therefore* (the word therefore is often the hinge upon which we swing from principle to practical) know that *only those who are of faith* are sons of Abraham.

“Wait. Relationship to Abraham isn't acknowledged *ethnically*?” No! Relationship to Abraham is acknowledged *spiritually*. Ethnicity has nothing to do w/it. Take a sneak peak over at Vs 28 (read). Jew, Gentile, white, black, Asian, Hispanic, even lines like male, female, employer/employee, they're all erased in Christ... We're all one in Christ & we're all found in Christ the same way, through faith.

When Paul said this it was like a right cross across the jaws of the Judaizers. Why? Because they believed and taught that salvation wasn't only *of* the Jews, it was limited *to* the Jews (thus the need for circumcision/law etc). They believed they were saved on the basis of their physical heritage, being of the lineage of Abraham w/whom God had made the covenant. (We'll see this when we get over to Vs 15-16)

But being a son of Abraham has nothing to do w/who you are physically, it has *everything* to do w/who you are *spiritually*. J.B. dealt w/this mindset. Remember there he was preaching repentance out in the desert & the Pharisees & the Sadducees came to check out his message. He began to rebuke them saying, “*Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'*” (as if it were cheap fire insurance) *For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”*⁵

Just being related to Abraham genetically wouldn't in anyway help you spiritually, eternally. Jesus made it clear (Jn 8:37-44) that a person could be of the lineage of Abraham genetically & still have the devil as their father spiritually.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 3:7-9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But this is another one of those crazy concepts that people can latch onto. They think they're headed for heaven because their grandma was a Christian, or their mom or dad are believers therefore they're ok. Not true, you don't get into heaven on the basis of your parent's faith, you've got to believe on the Lord J.C. personally, don't think you're ok because of someone else in your family.

Now that's not to say that God doesn't have a plan for ethnic Israel, He does. But no one goes to heaven based upon who they are genetically... the question is, do you trust in Jesus wholeheartedly?

Vs 8-9

Ok. Couple things we want to make clear here before we begin heading toward a close. #1 Faith does not save you, J.C. saves you, faith is the means, or the conduit through which the saving grace of God flows. But make no mistake, it's not faith that does the saving, it's Whom you place your faith *in*, that's where salvation is found. **Should you place your faith in anything or anyone else outside of Christ, you are not saved. It's not faith in humanity, faith in faith, faith in a set of rules or religious ethics, it's faith in J.C. (He is the One who saves you, through the means of His payment in full for our sins for which He suffered & died upon the cross, rising from the dead on the 3rd day).** #2 Faith isn't your source of righteousness, God is the source of your righteousness, faith is the basis upon which He accounts it to you... So salvation/righteousness isn't found *in* faith, those things come *through* faith, they're found in Christ.

But check this out, here in Vs 8 Paul personifies the Scripture. He says that the scripture foresaw, & that the scripture preached. You guys this is another passage that speaks strongly to the inspiration of scripture as being the Word of God. What he's saying is that when the scripture spoke, God spoke, they're one & the same.

& What he's telling us is that it's obvious that from the beginning God has always had it in his heart to bring justification to mankind (Jew or Gentile) through the means of faith. We can know that by the fact that God gave the good news (the gospel) to Abraham saying that in him all the nations would be blessed (that the Savior would arise from his lineage & salvation would go out to all of mankind through Him).

You see Abraham became a pattern to all who would follow him of how we receive the righteousness of God. We're saved, no different than Abraham was saved, there was no law involved, no religious ritual, He simply believed God & on that basis God counted him righteous.

Paul has shared subjective experience, he's supported it through objective scriptural evidence, salvation in Christ comes *by* faith, it is *of* faith.

Now I want to say this, then we'll be finished. Sometimes people get confused when you begin to speak on justification by faith alone. Because James said this, *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."*⁶

So what's the deal, is it faith or is it works? Yes. Were Paul & James contradicting one another? No. This goes back to believing *in* God, & *believing* God. James said, "You believe there's a God, that's great, the demons believe -- & tremble!" So acknowledging there's a God means nothing, demons will do that, they're not saved. The question is, "What is the fruit of my faith?" We might say that what Paul is discussing is the *root* of faith, what James is discussing is the *fruit* of faith.

The root is, "Faith in Christ alone saves you." However the fruit of saving faith in your life will bring forth works of righteousness... You see, if I told you that an F5 tornado was en-route to this fellowship & we had 10 minutes to evacuate, but then just kept on speaking like this & carried on you'd think, "He doesn't *really* believe that, he's doing nothing that correlates to that kind of declaration."

However if I gave you that information & then began barking impassioned directions for obtaining your children, finding shelter, praying for safety, you'd be convinced that I believed it. My life would bring forth works correlative to my belief. So to w/faith in Christ. If I tell you I believe, but then go out & party/cuss, live like the world you'd say, "He doesn't really believe, there's nothing about his life that affirms true faith."

However if I speak of faith in J.C. & you see a change in my life, things that set me apart from the world, a purity, good works, sacrifice & service to others, peace, joy & so forth. Then you're prone to say, "Man, he really believes this, his life bears witness to it."

That's why James could say, "You show me your faith w/out your works, I'll show you my faith *by* my works." Faith in Christ alone is sufficient to save you, however the by product of saving faith *in* me will be good works produced *through* me...

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jas 2:21-24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 9

What's the blessing? Not physical wealth, spiritual wealth, a right standing in the sight of God, sin removed *from* you, the righteousness of Christ *added to* you... it's *by* faith & *of* faith.

Prayer Points:

God thank you for the clear & simple truth of Your word. May we never grow callused toward it, but may we always be refreshed & encouraged *by* it. Thank You for the tremendous freedom we have in You, that it's not about rules or religious rituals, we're free to enjoy a relationship of intimacy w/You. Father bring forth the fingerprints of faith in our lives. May our lives be a testimony of our trust in You.

Listen, maybe you're thinking, this all sounds neat & all but I have real problems, my marriage is falling apart, my life is crumbling around me & need to know what to do, where to go, how to make things better. Listen, a right relationship w/your spouse, w/your friends, to the circumstances that surround you begins w/a right relationship w/God. Let's start right there. If your life doesn't belong to J.C. than today is the day of salvation for you. Believe on the Lord J.C. Believe God, surrender to Jesus & you'll be saved.