

Gospel Faith Leads to the Fullness Of the Spirit's Power

Ryan Fullerton | *illbehonest.com*

I have been at this conference every year for the past four years. And I think I can say that after a day-and-a-half, or I guess maybe two half-days, something like that, this one is my favorite. I have been ministered to in ways that I wasn't expecting, just getting to talk to brothers and sisters and receive encouragement in the Lord, and I hope I've been able to sit with a few of you and minister to you and encourage you. And so at the same time as I feel this opportunity to minister to and this opportunity to be ministered to, I have come away from the last day-and-a-half with an increased burden. I feel burdened. And I think I feel burdened in the best kind of way. I got to talk to John Sytsma this afternoon, and to hear about the obstacles to the work there in the 10/40 window. I got to hear from him of the sex trafficking in some of the countries where he's ministered. Entire towns without teenage girls. I've got a 13 year old. I don't even know how to process that. Because they've been sold, by and large, into the sex trade. I got to just say a few words to Josef Urban who we heard a great testimony from last year, and he was telling of a new church that's being planted in Mexico, and yet the thing under his breath is we need more workers. I got to speak to a brother who's a bi-vocational pastor who's serving a little church, but working a job that is killing him, and just seeing the quality of his service dwindle because of the amount of time he's having to pour into the job he has at this time. Spoke to a friend who's having problems with his house - the actual, physical one. Like, it's breaking down. And then, on top of that, problems in the home, extended family.

And I hear all that, and I'll be honest with you, my reaction as a preacher is: What's the sermon that can fix it all? I just want to help every one of those people and I assume that each of those people just represent all of us. That all of us have great need. And the question I come away from those conversations asking myself is what can sustain God's people? What can move so that there's more than enough workers in Mexico; what can move so whether a bi-vocational pastor gets more support, so he doesn't have to be bi-vocational, or he just gets strength to stay bi-vocational; what can move so that God's people are sustained when their homes and their houses and their extended family are falling as a result of the fall? And I believe we need a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We need an entire Person of the Trinity to help us. We need all of the Holy Spirit bringing us into all that Christ has done so that we can enjoy all of our relationship to the Father. And that sustains but it also motivates more to move out and help, doesn't it?

I talked to another brother today, and he said in the last twenty years, I've heard better, clearer, theologically precise presentations of the Gospel than I've ever heard before. And I believe we are witnessing a season where there are many clearly and biblically articulating the Gospel. And we should thank God for that. But he said before those twenty years, I heard less clear presentations of the Gospel, and they came with more power. That is not an excuse for a lack of precision in preaching. Study hard to show yourself approved, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But if it's rightly divided and powerless, that's one

more testimony that we need the power of the Holy Spirit. And if those burdens weren't enough, then we heard those last two sermons. And I just walk away from Brother Mack's sermon and Brother Kevin's sermon with this desire in my soul that I want to share with you from God's Word tonight. Remember Brother Mack's sermon: Christ was a man. He had an umbilical cord. He had been utterly dependent on His mother. He was a man. And yet, as a man, He moved like no other man moved because of the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit on His life. That's what motivated Christ. That's what empowered Christ to move as no other man moved was that He - our older Brother - had the Spirit that now we have been given.

Oh, if that doesn't whet your appetite for more empowerment from God's Spirit, you might need to put a mirror under your nose and check for breath. And then Brother Kevin so clearly laying out these two ways that men approach God. One: By blood sacrifice offered in faith - I love that point - that brings us to God. So glorious. It makes us accepted to God by Him. And the other way, which is offering our "very best" to God like He now owes us something, because we showed up to give Him our best, and how that is utterly rejected by God.

And what I want to do in this message is I want to try to combine the last two messages. I want to ask, how do you get the power of the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus Christ had on your life? How do you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit that Brother Mack said was on the Lord Jesus Christ? And I want to answer that question by saying it's by the Gospel Kevin preached. You see, this Gospel that our brother preached, for unbelievers - to win many of you to Christ, is the Gospel that Christians are meant to live by. It is not something that's merely to take us at the moment of our conversion. It's not something that's merely to grip us at the moment when we are born again, but it is to be our lifeblood for the entirety of our - I was going to say lives, but that would be wrong. For the entirety of our eternity. The light of eternity will be the slain Lamb of God. And so I want to think with you about what does it look like for the Gospel to give us the Spirit that empowers, and what would get in the way of the Gospel giving us the Spirit? So we know we need the Spirit and we know (or I hope we know) that in order to have more of the Spirit, we need to make sure that we are clinging to the Gospel. And so what I want to do, is I want to ask you a question. Then I want to answer it. Then I want to read a Scripture. And then I want to pray. I am going to pray. But I want to first ask you a question. Then I want to give you an answer. And then I want to read you a Scripture. And then I want to pray.

What should a good pastor do if he sees the people he loves drifting away from the Gospel? What should a faithful man of God do if he sees the people that he explained to them, he said to them, listen, the way you're saved is by nothing other than the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's by His shed blood alone, paying the blood penalty you should have paid, but He paid it. You simply repent and believe in Him. What if that man sees the people he loves swerving? Drifting into some system? Some man-made legalistic system that gives them another way to really be saved, or we'll even say, fully saved? To really enter in with God. What if he finds them learning that not only do they need to believe the Gospel, but they also need to abstain from all alcohol. That is clearly the way to heaven. What if he sees them find out that they need to embrace the Gospel, but clearly, they need to be homeschooling because if you're not homeschooling, you would clearly be in a second-class position with God. What if he sees them in a situation where they are hearing the Gospel, loving the Gospel, and then all of a sudden, they are being derailed into some idea that their church needs to be a particularly

perfect kind of way before they can really flourish in the Gospel? What kind of things would a pastor say to his people if he felt and if he saw that they were drifting from the Gospel? That's my question.

Here's my answer. You stupid fools! Who is feeding you this garbage? Are you drunk? Are you under some kind of spell? I preached Jesus Christ was crucified to pay for all your sins every week, and now you're eating up this legalistic garbage? Don't you remember when I first counseled with you, how you trusted the Gospel alone, and now you think you're going to get the Spirit by some finishing of some legalistic expectation? Some checklist? Are you completely out to lunch having started by God's Holy Spirit? Now, you've got this little checklist that you're going to keep and if you keep it perfectly you're going to be empowered for obedience? You are foolish! Have you had so many glorious experiences that flow from the Gospel? Or are you throwing that all away so you can go to the legalism? Listen, God does not supply the Spirit to you and work miracles in this congregation - He doesn't do it because you've fulfilled some legalistic checklist of expectations. He does it simply because you believe the Gospel. And I think that's the right answer. I think it's the right answer because I don't think that a godly pastor always sounds like Mr. Rogers on Valium with a Bible. Now Johnny, you really shouldn't be a legalist. Thinking you can work your way to heaven and you need to come on back to Jesus. I think sometimes a godly pastor sounds like a dad whose kid is playing in the road. And he engages in some sanctified yelling. You fool! Get out of the road! You're going to get killed in there! That car's going to roll over you and it's done! But more importantly, I think that's the way you respond because that's the way the Apostle Paul responded in Galatians 3:1-5. That's the way he spoke. Now, time out. That's not the way you normally speak. Some of you, you can take this sermon and from now on you're going to be: You fool! You fool! You fool! This ought to be the big exception to the general gentleness of your life.

"Oh, foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this - did you receive the Spirit by 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? Does He Who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Let's pray. Father, we come before You. We ask You, Lord, that You would... Well, first of all Lord, we just ask that You would pour out Your Holy Spirit on us and do miracles among us just by our belief in the Gospel. Just by the Gospel. That's my prayer, Lord. And I ask you to sanctify me to that task. Lord, I know that many of the things I'm saying are going to be said on a razor's edge. Give me clarity. Set a guard over the door of my mouth that I might not sin against You. I pray that You would anoint and empower and allow the Holy Spirit to be experienced so that Christ is known. I pray even for the moms with babies, that You'd even let them focus. Calm the children down. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Apostle Paul in this passage sounds like a man interrogating the Galatian Christians under lights. He is asking them questions of Gospel interrogation. Don't you remember how you received the Holy Spirit? Don't you remember what God did in your life? He's asking them rhetorical questions and he is asking them these questions so that they will be brought back to

their senses, and they will be rooted and grounded in the Gospel, and they will continue on in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why these firm questions are being asked by the Apostle Paul. The Galatian Christians, at this point in their history, were falling hook, line, and sinker for a teaching that said: Yes, Jesus is good, but you also need to get circumcised, you need to eat kosher, you need to celebrate all the Jewish holidays. Basically, you need to add the law of Moses to the Gospel, and then, you will be declared righteous. Then you will be fully part of God's inheritance and God's people.

This is what they were drifting into, and this is why Paul puts them under the lights and asks them all these questions. And all of these questions have one goal. The goal of all of these questions in Galatians 3:1-5 is to help the people of God see how they were justified; how they came to have the Holy Spirit; how they came to have the very power of God resting on their lives. And he wants them to see that it had nothing to do with circumcision, food laws, putting special days on your calendar; it is by something completely different. It is simply by faith in Jesus Christ alone and His finished work that the precious gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the people of God. And Paul, being a good preacher, does not ask complicated questions to the congregation. These were not questions where the Apostle Paul would ask you and you would go... Let me get back to you on that. Let me think about that. And let me respond at some time in the future with exactly what it is that is the answer to your question. No, these were very basic questions that the Apostle Paul was asking them. They were rhetorical questions. Like, what's two plus two? It's four. It's an obvious and a basic answer. And the Apostle Paul is asking them so that they will remember what it is that gave them the Holy Spirit. Are you clear on that? Are you clear on how a man or a woman receives the Holy Spirit? We all say we need more of the Holy Spirit. You probably can't find an evangelical that wouldn't say something like that. Everyone would acknowledge we need more of the Holy Spirit. Are you clear on how a person receives the Holy Spirit? And how they go on with the Holy Spirit in His power? These questions serve us. This is a pastor serving us. To make us crystal clear on how it is the church and the people of God receive the Holy Spirit.

Question #1: The first question is, "Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" Notice, he begins with a statement about them. They are foolish. And the question is: who? So, he says something bad about them, and then he asks, who's doing this to you? And we need to think for a minute about what a fool is. Because Paul is calling them foolish, but we need to think a little bit about what it is exactly to be a fool.

And there's two aspects that I think are critical here about foolishness in the Bible. Foolishness in the Bible is first of all that a fool doesn't see where present decisions are going to take him. A fool does not see where present decisions are going to take him. So, Proverbs 1 is written so that fathers can learn how to keep their children out of gangs. Because 3,000 years ago, apparently Solomon and the people in the time he was living were already dealing with gangs. This is not a modern problem. So in Proverbs 1, the father comes to the son and says, My son, if people come to you and say let's get rich, let's roll a few chumps, and let's get their money, do not go in with them, because you will die. You don't lay out a net for a bird in front of the bird. The bird won't go into that net. He's saying, you're going to get caught up in this messed up lifestyle and be destroyed, if you go in with these guys who want to make easy money. And what the father is doing to his son is he's saying, you need to know where this is

going. The gang members are just going to say, hey, we're brothers. Hey, we're going to get rich. Hey, it's going to be good. Here's the immediate payback. But the fool doesn't see where this is going. You get shot. A wise man says, I know where that's going.

Proverbs 5 is the same kind of language. Proverbs 5 says you see that beautiful woman? Her lips are dripping like honey? She's as bitter as wormwood. It does not say she's not pretty. If you try to convince a young man that a beautiful adulterous woman isn't pretty, he'll just think, you're out to lunch. She's pretty. The real answer is to tell him, she'll kill you. That's what's going to happen here. She is indeed pretty. She's poison. But a fool doesn't see it. He just sees the benefits of the gang. He just sees the thrill of the girl. He doesn't see where it's going. And these Galatians were signing up to a legalist system. They were thinking, well, let's get circumcised. That will get us in touch with our rich Jewish heritage. That would really be exciting to practice all those Old Testament laws. We want the full package. And Paul says in Galatians 5:2, Look, "I, Paul, say to you, that if you accept circumcision, then he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by law. You have fallen from grace." He's saying, you're just looking at the little entry package. Let's do the Passover meal. Let's do the special Jewish days. Let's practice all the Old Testament. That'll be so good. Paul's like, do you know what you're signing up for? You do a little bit of this and if you want to be accepted by God by doing a little bit of this, you've got to do it all. And you've got to do it all perfectly. So don't be a fool. They get tantalized by the appetizers. Because if you eat this poison pill, you need to take the whole meal. And I would have you have the Gospel, and not the law.

But there's another aspect to being foolish. You see, the fool not only doesn't see where things are going, but the fool misses the obvious. The fool has said in his heart... there is no God. Now, I think the Bible makes it pretty clear that the reality of God is the most obvious reality on the planet. My son and I years ago visited the Honda factory - I think it was the Honda factory - Toyota? Good thing I have my son here. So, the Toyota factory in Georgetown, Kentucky. And this place is amazing. We're driving around on this glorified golf cart, and there's all these robots, and they spring their arms into action and they drop weld beads right in the right place perfectly. They start with rolls of steel and out the other end of the factory drives a Camry. It's incredible. Can you imagine if I were to walk up to one of the engineers who had designed that marvelous plant and said, surely, there has been a whirlwind of metal here for billions and billions of years. I think he'd be insulted.

But the fool misses the obvious. The fool misses waterfalls and fingernails that push out of fingers and all the glorious workings of the human body, and nature, and biospheres. The fool looks at all of that and says, "there's no God." And the Apostle Paul calls the Galatians fools here because they were missing the obvious. Paul's preaching, and I mean this with no offense to Kevin Williams, because Kevin Williams was, if anything, clear this morning, right? But Paul was clearer. Kevin's not taking that as an insult right now - don't worry. Paul was the clearest of clear. Paul said, "It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified." My preaching was crystal clear on this point. I made abundantly clear that you were sinners and that Jesus Christ was crucified in front of you. That was my message. I preached it for years with tears. I went on and on about it. I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was a one-string banjo player with just one note on my banjo: Jesus

Christ is the liberator from sin. Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ is the one Who deals with all of the broken laws you've ever broken. Jesus Christ is the One Who saves you from the broken laws you've broken. He is the Savior of the world! I wonder if we need to get circumcised? You know, I think it's really important to make homemade bread. I mean it's loving your neighbor. It's loving your neighbor. All that mass marketing isn't loving your neighbor. Probably if you're a Christian, you basically have to do that. Surely, you must read your Bible for an hour every day. The Bible's clear. You know all those good verses about how you have to read your Bible for an hour? What's your favorite verse on that? I'm pretty sure you've got to do that to get to heaven. The fool begins to miss the obvious. The fool begins to fail to see where things are going. And so the fool misses out on the Gospel. And the Gospel is what brings the Spirit. And so the Apostle Paul asks these questions, and he asks them to bring them back to the Gospel. I should just comment on this one verse too before I move on. Notice he says "who" has bewitched you. Almost always when you begin to drift from the Gospel, there's a "who." And they're usually more exciting than your pastor because your pastor just plays that one-string banjo. And I want to tell you, that if you can identify the "who" that's pulling you away from the Gospel, you need to one-hundred percent and completely sever yourself from their teaching, and go with the most boring Gospel preacher you can find. That man will take you to heaven. Because that man will point you to the Man Who saves us from our sins.

Paul asks another question. Really, this is question number two and five. And this question is my favorite, specifically as it relates to our topic this evening. How did you get the Spirit? How did you get it? It's assumed here that the Galatians have experienced the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And now Paul asks them to remember their history. And he says to them, how did you get it? And he says, "let me ask you only this - did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" And then in v. 5, "Does He Who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" And now, these Galatians had experienced the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. They had come to the point where they said, "Jesus is Lord."

And 1 Corinthians tells us no one says Jesus is Lord in a genuine heartfelt way except by the Holy Spirit. They had come to taste something of love, joy, peace, patience, and these things come by the Holy Spirit. They had come to receive spiritual gifts by which they served each other through prophecies and through miracles and through acts of service, through knowledge and wisdom. They had come to receive the Holy Spirit and Paul says when did that start? Come on. Remember your testimony. I've got you under the lights. When did all of that spiritual work begin in your life? And he gives them two options. Did it begin when you began to practice the works of the law? Or did it begin when you were hearing the Gospel with faith? Now the works of the law in Galatians means those works which God's law requires. It means the things that were commanded in the Old Testament law. It means ceremonial things like circumcision, special days, special menus. But it also means those moral things like "thou shalt not murder," and "thou shalt not covet another man's wife." It means all that God commanded in the Old Testament law. And he says, was it when you started doing all the right things that God commanded, that you were given the Spirit? Or, was it when you simply heard Jesus Christ publicly portrayed before your eyes as crucified that you became spiritual people who began to walk in the Spirit? And again, the Galatians are supposed to go back. Now, think about the

average Galatian. The average Galatian had never read the law of Moses. Ok, there was no confusion for the average Galatian. The average Galatian says, yeah, I was eating kosher, and then the Spirit came... No, they weren't eating kosher at all. They were not Jews. They were Galatians. They weren't trying to practice the Ten Commandments. They had never celebrated a Passover in their life. They didn't have any circumcised children. They did not have any allegiance to or practice of the law of Moses. And a preacher came into their town; preached Jesus Christ can save you from your sins. They believed it and they received the Holy Spirit right then and there. The only and exclusive prerequisite to receiving the Spirit of God is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You put your faith in the One Who walked by the Spirit and you will receive the Spirit.

Now there are many good things in the Christian life. Family worship is a good thing. What a good thing for fathers to teach their children. Daily devotions. What a good thing to read the Bible every day. Principles of modesty. What a good thing to let the Lord Jesus Christ shape the way you dress. These are wonderful responses to grace. But it's amazing how quickly in the Christian life, we can turn them into new laws. New laws. So I want to ask you this: Had you mastered principles of modesty when you received the Spirit? You were just sitting there. The neckline was up to there and the skirt was down to there and the Spirit came! Right? Or maybe one day, you went into your quiet place and you said: now this devotional is going to be good. I'm going to read four chapters. McCheyne's plan. Come on. McCheyne. So you were going to do McCheyne's plan, but you weren't just going to do McCheyne's plan, you were going to do some meditating and some journaling. And you weren't just going to journal, you were going to do prayer and not just for you, but for the whole church you're a part of. And you know, you managed to split the time up and it wasn't too legalistic and you got that perfect quintessential devotional and boom! The Spirit of God fell on your life, right? That's how it happened for all of you, right? I know that's how it happened for me. I have the perfect devotions every morning. Was it the first time your rowdy family finally managed to do seven days a week of family worship? So the Spirit of God came? My wife's uncle used to make one of their children stand during family worship because he was so prone to fall asleep. The Holy Spirit's not on families like that. Beloved, the Holy Spirit comes on weak, wounded, broken, depraved sinners who believe the Gospel. And then after you get converted, there isn't a new way to get more of Him. There's that simple, continual trusting and resting in the Gospel that brings more of the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Will He gently lead you to be modest? You bet He will. Will He gently lead you to love His Word? You bet He will. Will He gently lead you to walk by the Spirit? Absolutely. But the order is everything.

Question number three. Verse 3 "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" What's happening here? We've established something. Paul says we know you started by the Spirit. You were a bunch of pagan Galatians. You didn't have any background in biblical truth. You heard the Gospel. You got the Spirit. And now, I've got to ask you. Are you going to go on and become just like Jesus by the flesh? Now, one of the sad things about reading this text in America, is that when we hear flesh, we tend to hear licentiousness. When we think of flesh, we tend to think of drinking too much. Sleeping around too much. Gambling. All those kinds of immoral and ungodly things. But for Paul here, flesh is referring to getting more religious, not less. The move towards the legalism of the Judaizers; the

move towards the legalistic heresy that Paul was confronting, was a move of the flesh. Because you see, the flesh, when it can't just rapidly grab all kinds of illicit sins, loves to clean itself up and make itself religious and be proud of its religion.

In Indonesia, I've walked through Indonesia, and you see men with bruises on their heads. I'm told they get these bruises by rubbing cans on their heads until their heads are bruised, but the bruises are meant to look like they've hit the floor five times a day in prayer. That's not devotion. That's the flesh. And we're told here that that fleshly instinct can creep back into the Christian life. Now, the Christian is not ultimately in the flesh, under the dominion of the flesh. But the Christian still deals with the flesh and experiences the desires of the flesh. And those desires can be extremely religious. They can include: I can't miss a service. I know all my kids are sick and it would be really servant-hearted to take care of my wife, but I cannot miss a service. I can't love you right now baby. I've got something fleshly to do. The flesh loves to accumulate religious duties in order to, often, tell other people about them. That's what the Pharisees did. But the flesh actually will sometimes be content not to tell anyone about them but just to suck on that self-righteousness like a lollipop. Just taste the sweetness of: I'm doing it. I'm getting it together.

Now Christians get all in a huff: How do I know if I'm doing my devotions in the flesh or in the Spirit? It's not complicated, beloved. It's not. Paul says the works of the flesh are obvious. They're obvious. You come out of that room from doing your devotions and you're an angry mess with your family, I'll tell you one thing that wasn't happening in your devotions. It wasn't communion with the Spirit. Right, the works of the flesh are (Galatians 5) obvious. Galatians 5, the Apostle Paul says, v.19. The works of the flesh are very hard to understand, and you should engage in perpetual introspection to discover them. Right? Just gaze in there. Peel that onion of your soul. Was that the flesh? That's not the kind of bondage the New Testament puts you in. "The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies." There's a kind of devotion to the things of God that can't stop looking at porn. Because it's all just self-driven. There's a kind of devotion to this list of things God wants me doing that can't stop getting angry. Can't stop indulging in impurity.

But the way to abandon that is the way to realize that the way you become perfected - perfected just more like Jesus - is you keep putting your faith in Jesus. You keep trusting in Jesus. You put your faith in Jesus on your best day. Lord, I just ministered to people all day; poured my life out for people all day. You know what? I'm going to heaven because Jesus Christ was portrayed before me as crucified. And then you fall flat on your face one day, and you fall into the same old sins that have been dragging you down for years. You just fall right on your face, and you get up and you say, Lord, I need the Spirit right now. I need the Spirit and the only way I can get Him is because the Lord Jesus Christ paid fully for all of my sins. I have a friend who talks about how he does his devotions. I love what he says. He says that when he does his devotions on his best day, after he's done his devotions, he closes his Bible and says, Lord, that was a good time of communion with You, but I am not justified by that good time of communion with You. I am justified by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he tells that when he does devotions on his worst days - you know the kind where you find drool on the page later? Or you feel like you're trying to get one of those bruises. At the end of that

devotional, you just close your Bible and say I'm not any less justified. Not any less justified. In fact, I am fully justified. Not because of the quality of my time in Your Word, but because of Your death on the cross for me.

Question number four. It's the shortest one. Did you suffer so many things in vain? Paul says did you suffer so many things in vain? Did you suffer so many things and now it's just useless? And there's great debate about what this word "suffering" means. Generally, this word translated "suffering" here does just mean exactly that. Persecution - that kind of suffering that we've just heard about. I don't think that's what it means here. And I think that because it would be completely out of the context. William Hendrickson says, "if it is correct that this word suffering (incomplete thought) means physical suffering or kind of emotional suffering; if that was correct, Paul would be introducing an entirely new thought at this point, one which he has said nothing whatever in the preceding, which he drops immediately, and to which he never again alludes in the remainder of the letter." I think this word suffering here simply means, did you experience so many things in vain? And it's really in the light of the rest of the context. Did you have these miracles? Did you experience the Spirit? But the idea here is if you now go off into a way of the flesh, all that initial experience was useless.

Now, I want to close this evening by making two observations. And when I say close, I don't mean like right away. I want to close this evening by just making two observations. Stepping back and noticing something about what we've just studied. I want you to notice - and really many commentators have noticed it - I want you to notice that the whole argument that Paul has just put forward was based on experience. Paul has not been trying to get the Galatians to get their experience back in line with good doctrine. He has been laboring to get their doctrine back on track through the reminder of their experience. Now we need to think about that very carefully. We live in a day and age when Christians are on one of two poles when it comes to experience. Some are addicted to it. Others are allergic to it. Some always need a new experience. They went to a service. There was holy laughter this week. Now their teeth turning into gold the next week. It's just like drug addicts. I was one of them. I know what it was like. You get high on something one week. You need more the next week. There was some good preaching one night. You need some more awesome preaching the next night. There can be this addiction to experience.

At the same time, there can be others who are allergic to experience. They tell us that if you focus on feelings your experience will lose your grip on the truth. If you focus on your feelings, you will be following, not the Holy Spirit, but maybe just what you ate for lunch. You don't want to focus on feelings, they say, and on experience because the Bible is enough for you. Don't focus on your experience. Now there is a grain of truth there. You cannot lead your Christian life by day-to-day experience. But that doesn't mean there's no experience, beloved. If we are biblical, we really can't say that either one of these poles is right. In fact, we have to say, both of these poles are wrong. Even if some people abuse experience and abandon the Bible to follow experience, we can't play it down and we can't make less of it, because it was obviously central to the lives of these early Christians. Paul everywhere assumes in Galatians 3:1-5 that no one would say, I'm not even sure if I have the Holy Spirit. Do you know what I'm saying here? See, these questions, they assume an experiential Christianity. When you say to someone, "When did you receive the Spirit?" "How did you receive the Spirit?" And you expect answers

back. You are assuming that the people you're talking to have experienced something of the Holy Spirit. Are there different measures? Are there different degrees? Certainly. But no experience of the Holy Spirit is not an option.

And we need to think clearly about this. Because Paul is leading the people back to good doctrine with a reminder of their experiences. In fact, far from being a danger to doctrine, I want to say from Galatians 3:1-5 that experiential Christianity - listen to me, brothers and sisters - guards and protects doctrinal Christianity. Anybody here care about doctrine? Yeah, the rest of you just don't want to raise your hands. You're at the Fellowship Conference. You care about doctrine. Anyone here care about doctrine? Yeah, that's right. One of the safeguards to keeping you doctrinally on track is an experiential relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. And it's by experience that is rooted and grounded in the Gospel.

You ought to be saying, whoa, what happened here? Why am I so powerless? Why am I so angry? Why am I all of a sudden falling into so much sexual immorality? Even though I'm doing all kinds of religious things, what's going on? I got off the Gospel. Yeah, that's what happened. I was walking in a much different place when I was just thinking of Jesus Christ plackarded before me as crucified. That was a much different time. Experiential Christianity guards and preserves doctrinal Christianity. It is not its enemy. This means we should preach an experiential Christianity. We should not just hope it blows in every now and then. But we should preach an experiential Christianity. One of the amazing things - I don't know how God does this - but God in many ways, limits His work according to the quality of teaching His people are receiving. Anybody here grow a lot more after they receive good teaching? You didn't just get born again when you received good teaching, but the presence of increased measures of truth in the believer's life cultivates a maturity. And so if you don't preach on the reality of the Holy Spirit, it is very unlikely that people will know the fullness of the Holy Spirit. That's why the apostles preached: repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and I've got no idea what's going to happen next. No, that's not what they preached. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit. When they were threatened in Acts 3 with persecution - and you can pray this for the church that our brother mentioned. When they were persecuted in Acts 3, they prayed, "Lord, look upon the threats of our enemies, and grant to your servants to continue to speak Your Word with all boldness while You stretch out Your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

Beloved, we need to be a people who preach and pray for the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Ok? Here's my most common experience of preaching. My most common experience of preaching is: Ryan you are 36 or 24 hours away from preaching. How do you feel? Terrible. That's how I feel. I call my wife: Honey, it never stops. Every time I'm supposed to preach, I just feel like I've got nothing. No power. No nothing. What am I going to do? Jesus Christ is clearly plackarded in front of me as crucified. And I'm thinking, if I'm going to preach well, there had better be some perfect devotional moments before that time. Right? But invariably, my best devotional moments are substandard. Oh, there are some great times, but you know, it's nothing to write home about sometimes. And so what do you do? Get up in the pulpit and say, well, you know, it just wasn't perfect today. So, I've got nothing for you. Or do you say, here I am

one more time, Lord. All I've got's the Gospel. Would You put Your Spirit on me again? And that doesn't just apply to preachers. You're going into that job you hate. Lord, I woke up this morning. I tried to read Your Word. It was a pretty good morning. It wasn't perfect. But you know what, I'm not going off perfection. I'm heading into work now, and if I'm going to be nice to these people - not just nice, but exceedingly kind, forgiving, loving, Christlike, bold, witnessing... all I've got is Jesus Christ publicly displayed in front of me as crucified. The Spirit answers to the blood. The Spirit answers to the blood and tells me I'm born of God. You want more of the Spirit? Go to the Gospel. Again and again.

Last point. The experiential Christianity or the experience of the Spirit that Mack described on the Lord Jesus Christ - and who doesn't want more of that? - really was meant to be yours. If anyone believes in My name, He will do the works that I do. Now just stop the verse there. Don't finish it. That by itself is unbelievable. The words He spoke. Words that pierced to the heart of the most difficult, naughty situations. The foot washing He did. Serving. If ever there was a time when it would be ok - it wouldn't be ok - but it would be understandable for a man to go into a corner and sulk. He's about to experience the wrath of God. Our Lord is washing feet. The miracles He did. If anyone believes in My name, he will do the works that I did. And then unfathomably, Jesus adds, greater works than these will he do. Why? There's a reason why. Because I am going to the Father. What difference does it make that You go to the Father? He pours out the Spirit on His people when He goes to the Father. The reality that Mack talked about in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is meant in measure to be ours. And it comes initially and continually through the message Kevin preached. But through the Gospel of simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Putting your faith in the One Who had the Spirit without measure is what imparts to you the Spirit that He had. And so beloved, I would encourage you before you read your Bible next time; before you try to be nice to your brothers and your sisters; before you try to preach; before you try to be exemplary at work, ask the Lord God to remind you of what was publicly portrayed in front of you in Christ crucified and to give you the Holy Spirit. It is the only way to pursue perfection. It is the only way to pursue more Christlikeness in your life.

Let's pray. Father, we come before You, and we want to pray through the night, fast, seek You, witness with boldness, see angels all around us when we're scared. But these things do not come to a different kind of man or a different kind of woman. They come to those who continually place themselves under the foot of the Lord Jesus Christ and trust His Gospel. So, Lord, make us strong in the Spirit by continually weakening us and placing us under the cross. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.