

Faith like Abraham

Galatians 3:6-14

Over the past few weeks, we have discussed the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Paul has clearly argued that this biblical doctrine is central to the gospel. The Galatians had been influenced by Judaizers, those who taught works of the law were also necessary to secure salvation. Apparently, the Judaizers sought to use Abraham as an example to justify their teaching. In the text, Paul addresses the faith of Abraham, and all who are justified by faith.

As one considers Abraham, and all the saints of the Old Testament, the question is often raised – how were they saved and made acceptable to God? While it may seem difficult to fully comprehend, Scripture is clear that they were justified by faith, like all who believe. When we pause to consider it, only a small portion of believers over the time of humanity were present when Jesus died and rose again. The rest have had to look to Calvary and the empty tomb by faith. Some looked forward to the time when God's promise of the Messiah would be fulfilled, and others, like us, look back to the time when Jesus fulfilled redemption's plan. Regardless, we are all justified by faith in the finished work of Christ.

As we discuss the [factors](#) associated with faith in Christ, I want to consider: [Faith like Abraham](#).

I. Justified through Faith (6-9) – Using Abraham as a biblical example, Paul continues to argue for justification through faith. Notice:

A. Abraham's Justification (6) – [Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness](#). This is a simple and emphatic statement. Abraham believed God, and his belief in God, (his faith in God), was accounted to him for righteousness. Abraham was declared righteous by God based on his faith in God. [Gen.15:6 – And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness](#). Although Abraham lived prior to the atoning work of Christ being completed, his faith in the promises, yet to come, secured his righteous standing with the Lord. His life would reveal his faith, but Abraham's acceptance of God was based on his faith, not works of the flesh.

B. The Believer's Identification (7-8) – [Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.](#) ⁸ [And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed](#). Paul further admonished the Judaizers. Those who are justified by faith are the true children of Abraham. Those justified by faith stand as children of Abraham, and as such, children of the Lord. Being

accepted within the family of God is not inherited biologically, but spiritually. In fact, God's promise of blessing the nations through Abraham was a spiritual promise. Through the lineage of Abraham, Christ would come. His redeeming work would provide salvation for all who place their faith in His finished work. By declaring that all nations would be blessed in Abraham, God was preaching the gospel before Abraham even had a biological son to carry on his lineage. God had a plan!

C. The Believer's Provision (9) – *So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

The Judaizers would never have questioned the faith or blessing of Abraham. However, they believed one had to adhere to the law in order to receive such blessings. Paul declared the blessings of God are secured by faith, not through a particular bloodline or works of the flesh. Faith secures justification, and faith results in the favor of God for those who believe. Neither Jew or Gentile has any claim to justification apart from faith. *The blessing bestowed on Abraham, of being counted righteous on the basis of his faith in the Lord, is the blessing now bestowed on all—the blessing of being counted righteous on the basis of our faith in the Lord.¹*

II. Condemned without Faith (10-12) – After speaking of Abraham's justification by faith, and affirming, yet again, justification by faith for all who believe, Paul spoke of the condemnation of those outside of faith. Consider:

A. The Sinner's Position (10) – *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Those who continue to seek righteousness through the works of the law remain under the curse – they remain separated from God, condemned in their sin, due to their inability to keep the whole law. The only way to overcome the condemnation of the law, apart from Christ, would be to keep the law perfectly, and no man has the ability to keep the entire law. James declared that if we failed in one point of the law, we are guilty of breaking the entire law, [James 2:10](#). Paul had lived the life of a devout Pharisee, and he knew that he wasn't able to keep the entire law. Those who choose to "earn" their salvation will never be saved; they will remain cursed by the very law they try to uphold.

B. The Sinner's Prohibition (11) – *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* While this was certainly not well received by the Judaizers, Paul declared that no one is justified in the sight of God by an attempt of keeping the law. *The just shall live by faith.* This stands to reason, doesn't it? If we are justified by faith, then it would stand to reason that God expects us to live by faith. That doesn't imply that we live a life filled with willful sin, but that we live by faith in the atoning work of Christ in securing our salvation. *The ways of law*

*and faith are mutually exclusive. To live by law is to live by self-effort and leads inevitably to failure, condemnation, and death. To **live by faith** is to respond to God's grace and leads to justification and eternal life.* ⁱⁱ

C. The Sinner's Predicament (12) – *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.* Paul reveals the stark contrast between law and faith. The two are not synonymous. Those who choose to seek righteousness by the law must be willing and able to live according to the law. One must be willing to keep the perfect law of God without fail. In essence, one must be able to live a perfect life, a life that was lived by Christ. I have, and will continue to argue, man is not capable of keeping the entire law of God without ever failing. Once we have failed in keeping one part of the law, we have become sinful, and have not kept the law. Thus, we are all condemned in our sin – unable to keep the law of God perfectly. *Rom.3:20a – Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*

III. Redeemed in Faith (13-14) – Here Paul reveals what Christ provided for us, redeeming us from the curse of the law and providing for our justification. Notice:

A. The Believer's Redemption (13a) – *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* The law of God reveals His righteousness and the inability of mankind to attain such righteousness. The law reveals humanity's depravity and their separation from God. Because of our inability and depravity, we are cursed by the law – deserving of divine judgment. Through His great sacrifice on the cross, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. He paid our ransom and freed us from the bondage of sin.

➤ This was no small endeavor. He gave Himself physically as the sacrifice for sin, and He became sin for us that we might be made righteous before the Father. *2 Cor.5:21 – For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Christ bore our sin as He suffered on the cross, enduring the divine judgment we deserved. *In ancient Judaism a criminal who was executed, usually by stoning, was then tied to a post, a type of **tree**, where his body would hang until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God. It was not that a person became cursed by being hanged on a tree but that he was hanged on a tree because he was cursed. Jesus did not **become a curse** because He was crucified but was crucified because he was cursed in taking the full sin of the world upon Himself.* ⁱⁱⁱ

B. The Believer's Restoration (14) – *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Through the

redeeming work of Christ, those who come to Him by faith receive the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit through faith, i.e. salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Those who were under the curse of the law, condemned in sin and in danger of divine judgment, are made righteous through faith in Christ, being restored to a right relationship with God.

➤ Being justified by faith in the finished work of Christ was God's plan before creation. This was the plan through which God promised blessing to all nations through Abraham. Christ was obedient to the plan of the Father, offering Himself the sacrifice which atoned for sin, and through Christ salvation is made available by faith in Him.

Conclusion: Paul has faithfully defended the faith in these verses. We are justified by faith in Christ, and through Him, we are restored unto the Father, receiving the blessing of salvation. There is no other means of salvation. No other atoned for our sin. No other is worthy before the Father. One cannot keep the law of God, and thus, apart from Christ, remain under the curse of the law. I am thankful for the provision of Christ and the blessings associated with salvation in Him.

ⁱ John Phillips, [*Exploring Galatians: An Expository Commentary*](#), The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publishers; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ga 3:9.

ⁱⁱ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Galatians*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 77.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, 78.