

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 3:1-14 – Part 3 / Galatians 3:6-9 – Sons of Abraham

Introduction - Summary

The Gospel begins with the good news of God for reconciliation with God through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ. The Gospel also includes that our life is governed by grace and not by law, by faith and not works.

Justification, being right before God, is never by works. Our rightness before God is only through believing in God, that is, believing in Jesus Christ.

We live under grace. This means that God has provided all blessings as a free gift, and we incur no punishment, no curse for violations. The activity of the believer deals with honoring or pleasing the Lord, not being right in His evaluation.

We live by faith. In general, we live our lives with respect to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Living by faith also gets into specifics, but for this letter, the general concept is what is discussed initially.

Review - Clarification

Galatians 3:1-5 must be in full view when reading and studying Galatians 3:6-9. The problem that is faced in Galatia is that believers are being persuaded that acts of the flesh, works, and following the Law complete the believer before God.

The question of initial justification is not the question. When a person believes in Jesus Christ (His identity, work, promise), they are eternally secure as a born-from-above, adopted child of God. They are justified in God's sight. And that position with God can never be lost, nor can it ever be revoked.

As believers, we still have lives to live. And the most basic question we have is, "How then shall we live?" Before we consider works, activity, and life choices, we first ask, "How do we make sure God continues to view us as being right in His eyes?"

1. We continue to develop our understanding of Jesus Christ (Christology) so that none of us ever doubts the reality of our salvation through Jesus.
2. When we learn the doctrines of God through the reading and study of Scripture, we are to believe it. When we believe God in what He says in the text, God deems us as being right in his eyes.

Abraham is the example of this. Not only did he believe in the Lord and receive the righteousness of God, guaranteeing eternal life in the resurrection, but Abraham also believed God every step of the way. Every new revelation that God gave Abraham, he believed God, and God accounted it to him as righteousness.

This is one of the more difficult concepts for us to understand because we have a very narrow understanding of righteousness/justification. These words simply mean "to be seen or evaluated as right." In the Bible, there are many uses of just, right, justified, and righteous.

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- Initial justification (Romans 3:24, 4:1-5)
- Justification before men (James 2:21-26)
- Righteousness of God in His judgments (2 Thessalonians 1:6)
- Right activity (Ephesians 6:1; 2 Peter 1:13)
- Just punishment from men (Luke 23:41)
- A believer is seen as right before God based upon continued and further belief (Galatians 5:4)

Abraham, the righteous one, was right in God's eyes perpetually (perpetually righteous), because Abraham believed what God told him perpetually.

If Abraham, the righteous one, didn't believe something God told him, then Abraham, the righteous one, was wrong in God's eyes (unrighteous).

If we don't want to be wrong in God's eyes, then we need to believe Him.

As believers, if we want to be right in God's eyes (righteous), we need to believe what He has said in scripture. If we don't, we are wrong in His eyes (unrighteous).

Galatians 3:6-9 – The Sons of Abraham

In this explanation from Paul, we also see the problem in Galatia more precisely defined. What did these disturbers teach?

They were teaching that believing in Jesus Christ plus circumcision (following the Law of Moses) was needed in order to be complete. We relate completion to spiritual maturity. The disturbers were using this concept of completion in regard to the Gentile believers having a role in the kingdom of God. This is captured in the statement, *sons of Abraham*. Let's go back to the introduction of this letter.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, a Gentile can become a "gēr," a foreigner that believes in YHWH, has submitted to the full Law of God, and has been circumcised. They are welcomed and embraced among the Israelites and afforded the same rights and responsibilities as Israelites. They can marry Israelites, but there are limitations; they are not Israelites. But in the kingdom, they are granted an inheritance in the land. In the New Testament, "gēr" are the proselytes, and to be a proselyte was thought to be an adopted son of Abraham.

The system of proselytization was under the Law. And under that system, there were eternal benefits for the proselyte in the kingdom. But in the Hebrew Scriptures, this is not equated to being a son of Abraham. Paul is going to explain that those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham.

Does that mean that believers are the true Jews? No! Jews are a particular line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Being an Israelite, a Jew, is not a religious affiliation but an

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identity based on genealogy. National Jews are biological sons of Abraham, and that nation is the subject of the national promises in the kingdom of heaven.

But *sons of Abraham* has a spiritual (not mystical) component. That designation is reserved for those who are of faith.

Galatians 3:8 – The Scripture, foreseeing that by faith God would justify the Gentiles, proclaimed the gospel beforehand to Abraham, “All the nations will be blessed in you.”

The Scripture refers to a specific passage – Genesis 12:1-3

The word *foreseeing* is “προοράω prooraō.” This is a compound word from “pro” and “eidō” and literally means “seen beforehand.” In Genesis 12, God speaks to Abraham, recording as a writing, telling him that all the nations will be blessed through him.

The promise in Genesis 12 was looking forward from that point and telling Abraham that the seed promise was not for the seed line only but for all people. This was true before Abraham, but now we are getting more specific.

Proclaiming the gospel beforehand is one word “προεευαγγελίζομαι proeuangelizomai” in Greek — good news proclaimed previously. The promise of the blessing of Abraham was never to the Jew alone. Israel was supposed to take this truth to the nations.

Galatians 3:9 – Consequently, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, believers.

What is the blessing of Abraham?

1. The righteousness of God is credited to someone by faith and not by works, thus reconciling the sinner to God.
2. Perpetual justification of the believer is by faith. God deems the believer right, not by works, but through continually believing in Jesus and believing God in further promises.
3. Romans 4:13 – We are heirs of the world through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 8:16-17 – Being children of God means that we are heirs — heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 – Saints will have authority over the world and also over the angelic realm.

Revelation 1:4-6 – He made us to be kingdom priests. We will have position and authority in His kingdom.

What do we call this? In our study of Christology, we should ask, “Do we know who we are dealing with?” In studies of grace, we should ask, “Do we know what we have as a free gift from God, simply because we believed in Jesus?”