

**SONS OF ABRAHAM
PART 5**

TEXT: GALATIANS 3:6-14

March 7, 2010

REVIEW/INTRODUCTION:

In Galatians 3:6-14, Paul appeals to the OT Scriptures and uses Abraham as a “test-case” to confirm his thesis in 2:16, namely that justification is by faith alone apart from the works of the law (v. 6- Gen. 15:6; v. 8- Gen. 12:3; v. 10- Deut. 27:26; v. 11- Hab. 2:4; v. 12- Lev. 18:5; v. 13- Deut. 21:23).

In vv. 6-9, Paul begins by setting forth 3 arguments, which demonstrate that the blessing of justification comes through faith alone apart from works of the law.

Thus far, we have seen:

- I. ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED AS AN UNCIRCUMCISED GENTILE. V. 6
- II. SONSHIP IS NOT PHYSICAL BUT SPIRITUAL. VV. 7, 9

In Galatians 3:8, Paul argues that:

- III. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE HAS ALWAYS BEEN GOD’S METHOD OF SALVATION FOR SINNERS. V. 8
 - A. THE BIBLE’S MESSAGE

Genesis 3-11 reveals how the curse, which was the consequence of Adam and Eve’s fall, affects all mankind. Even though God makes a promise to Noah, these early chapters in Genesis are marked predominantly by death, destruction and judgment. However, as chapter 11 ends with the chaos of Babel, chapter 12 begins with God speaking a gracious word of hope and salvation out of the chaos!

We must pause here for a moment and ask: Is this not what God in Christ has done for us?

Christ has come to us and spoken a gracious word of hope and salvation out of the chaos that so characterizes our lives. Psalm 107 begins and ends by calling on God’s people to give thanks to God for His never-ending “steadfast love.”

“⁴¹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever... ⁴³ Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.”

How does the Psalmist demonstrate the goodness and steadfast love of the Lord? Look at v. 10. The Psalmist says, “Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons.” But, because of God’s steadfast love, the Psalmist declares, “He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart,” (v. 14).

Is this not the great hope that is found in the gospel? Jesus has entered into our chaotic world and spoken a gracious word of salvation and hope to those whose lives are bound up in the darkness of sin and the shadow of death. He has come to burst apart our soul-enslaving, idols and to give us life and freedom!

Matthew 4:16 says, “the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” In Luke 1:79, Zechariah prophesies of Jesus and says that He came, “to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

What is this light and peace?

Listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Listen also to Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These benefits exemplify why Genesis 12:1-3 records the most crucial event that occurs between the fall of Adam and the birth of Christ. The rest of the Bible is an outworking of the promises God makes to Abraham. The chaos that had come to ruin God’s world would be overturned through God’s promises to Abraham. Out of sheer grace, God promises to begin creating a new world characterized by righteousness. Through the good news that God announced to Abraham, the cursed nations of the world will be blessed.

To quickly review, what was the good news preached to Abraham?

The good news was that God would declare all people, Jew and Gentile, righteous on the basis of faith alone.

This good news, Paul argues in Galatians 3:8, is the unifying message of the Bible. The gospel preached to Abraham is in essence the gospel Paul preached to the Galatians (and us).

Before moving on from this point, I want to take a moment and help you see more clearly how the gospel is revealed in the account of Abraham, albeit in embryonic form. So, turn with me to Genesis 22.

In Genesis 22, we have glimpses of how Abraham believed in substitutionary atonement as well as resurrection.

God tells Abraham to take his son Isaac and go to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). As Abraham and Isaac made their way up Mt. Moriah, Isaac realizes a crucial piece for the burnt offering was missing. So, he says to his father, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering,” (22:7)?

Note carefully Abraham’s response in v. 8, “Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son,” (and God did!, vv. 13-14).

Abraham also believed in resurrection. Before Abraham went up the mountain with Isaac, he told the two young men that he brought with him, “... Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you,” (v. 5). Abraham believed that Isaac would come back down the mountain with him!

Now, if Genesis 22:5 were all that we had in order to prove that Abraham believed in resurrection, the evidence would admittedly be sparse. Perhaps Abraham was trying to exercise positive thinking? Maybe Abraham was just hoping in spite of the obvious?

Later revelation reveals, however, that resurrection is exactly what Abraham believed. The author of Hebrews in 11:19 writes, “He (*Abraham*) considered that God was able even to raise him (*Isaac*) from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back,” (see also Rom. 4:17).

Even though the revelation Abraham possessed was not as clear as ours, the faith he possessed rested in both substitutionary atonement and resurrection.

Now that Jesus has come, we have been given the privilege of full sight concerning His person and work. We are called to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel, just like Abraham.

What does it mean to believe the good news?

It simply means that we believe what the Bible announces to us concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection. To believe is to receive and rest in the fact that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave for our justification.

In Romans 3:24-25a Paul refers to Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross and says that all who believe, “²⁴ are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

In Romans 4:24-25, Paul refers to Christ's resurrection says that just as Abraham was counted righteous by faith alone, so we also ²⁴...will be counted righteous "who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

The moment we believe in the crucified and risen Christ, we are counted righteous just like Abraham was.

This raises a very important question: How can we be certain this is true?

The answer is that the certainty of God's promise is sure because it is founded upon an authoritative word. This leads us to a second and important point Paul makes about the Bible from Galatians 3:8.

Not only does Paul set forth the Bible's message but he also sets forth the Bible's authority.

LESSON:

B. THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY

The Judaizers boasted of their "high view" of Scripture. They took great pride in their physical descent from Abraham and exalted in Moses and the Law. Yet, Paul argues that if they understood the Scriptures, they would have known that the Scriptures taught that God's promises to Abraham preceded the law by 430 years! They would have also known that the Scriptures taught that the Gentiles were recipients of God's blessing (i.e., justification) by faith alone apart from works of the law.

Simply put, Paul is arguing that the Judaizers were misreading the Bible, taking Scripture out of its proper context (i.e., conflating the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants).

The Judaizer's twisting of the OT Scriptures highlights a critical point about the study of Scripture. John Stott writes, "Every word of the Bible is true only in its context. Isolated from its context, it may be quite untrue," (*Understanding the Bible*, p. 159). Every text has a context. We must keep this in mind when we approach the study and teaching of Scripture.

Note carefully the way Paul refers to Scripture in v. 8. He says the Scriptures do two things: 1. "the Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles,"; 2. "the Scriptures preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham."

B.B. Warfield, commenting on Paul's personification of Scripture notes,

"It was not, however, the Scripture (which did not exist at that time) that, foreseeing God's purposes of grace in the future, spoke of these precious words to Abraham, but God Himself in His own person... These acts could be attributed to

“Scripture” only as the result of such a habitual identification, in the mind of the writer, of the text of Scripture with God as speaking, that it became natural to use the term “Scripture says,” when what was really intended was “God, as recorded in Scripture, said,” (*The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 299-300).

Simply put, when Scripture speaks God speaks (cf., Rom. 9:17)! Phil Ryken comments, “The Bible is God’s word written. This is why the Scripture is alive. It has the power to announce because God speaks in it with a living and powerful voice,” (*Galatians*, p. 101).

Galatians 3:8 clearly reveals how in Paul’s mind he identified Scripture with the words of God. Galatians 3:8 serves then as an important passage for the Christian’s belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Paul says that the promises made to Abraham came directly from the mouth of God.

Why is this important?

The answer is we must be able to trust whether the gospel message (i.e., justification by faith alone) is true because our eternal destiny depends on it!

We live in a culture, which claims that all religions are basically true and therefore all lead to salvation even though the “path” may be different. Such beliefs obviously lead to a denial of the authority of the Bible and its exclusive gospel message.

The effect of such strong cultural pressure can result in a lessening of confidence in the truth of Scripture and specifically the gospel. Thus, Paul’s high view of Scripture undergirds the authority and truthfulness of the gospel message.

The words of Scripture, which reveal to us the gospel, come straight from the mouth of God. Since then the gospel is grounded in a divinely given, authoritative word, we can confidently entrust ourselves to God for our eternal destiny. We can be assured that what God has promised in the gospel is actually true and will come to pass.

CONCLUSION:

In light of Paul’s argument in v. 8, I want to leave you with several implications for the gospel and your life.

1. THE GOSPEL IS TRUSTWORTHY.

Because God’s plan of salvation is based on divinely revealed, authoritative truth it is totally trustworthy.

Paul tells us that the gospel is a divinely announced message from God concerning the way in which we can be made right with Him (cf. Gal. 1:11-12, Not Man’s Gospel!).

In 2 Peter 1, Peter labors to prove the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the gospel. In v. 16, he argues that it wasn't a myth. It wasn't a myth because he was an eyewitness of Christ's transfiguration where God displayed the "majesty" (glory and power) of His beloved Son (v. 18).

Note, however, the way Peter goes on to argue in vv. 19-21. He makes a powerful claim in regard to the authority and truthfulness of Scripture. He argues that as trustworthy as his experience on the Mt. of Transfiguration was (v. 18), the prophetic word of the OT Scriptures is more sure!

“¹⁹ we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter is simply saying, “If you don't believe me (v. 18), then go to the Scriptures (vv. 19-21),” (Green, *TNTC, 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 98)!

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, emphasizes twice that the gospel is founded upon the authority of the Scriptures. And last but most importantly, the foremost reason we believe in the authority of Scriptures is because of how Jesus endorsed and used the OT (Matt. 4:10; 5:17; 21:42; 26:54, 56; Lk. 24:27, 32, 44). One who carefully searches the Gospel narratives cannot but conclude that Jesus viewed and used the Old Testament as an infallible authority. The gospel, then, is a divinely revealed, fully authoritative promise of God (cf. Gal. 1:11-12).

2. THE GOSPEL IS ASSURING.

Because the gospel is trustworthy, we can rest with assurance in what He has promised us.

There are times in our lives when we become so overwhelmed with the reality of our sin and failure that these things seem to discredit or refute the promise of justification.

How can God really count me righteous when I sin so much?

This is why Paul directs us to Abraham. At almost every turn of Abraham's life, it seemed as if God's promises were going to be derailed through both his personal sin as well as seemingly impossible circumstances.

All of these apparent obstacles point us to one simple yet critical truth: Everything rests on what God has promised.

God is faithful and will fulfill His promises as Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” We must not think of the Genesis account as a portrayal of the wholehearted obedience of Abraham.

Steve Levy writes,

“If you’re looking for something special about Abraham you’ll be disappointed-but that’s the whole point. Our contribution to our salvation is our sin. Salvation is about what God has done in Christ. It is what God does and Abraham’s faith in what God does that makes Abraham right. His faith in Jesus is the reason he is in heaven. It is all God’s kindness in Jesus which he most definitely did not deserve,” (*Bible Overview*, p. 91).

The Genesis account is not about what Abraham did. Rather, the emphasis in the Genesis account falls on what God promises to do! Note carefully in Genesis 12:1-3 all of God’s “I wills’.”

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that **I will** show you. ² And **I will** make of you a great nation, and **I will** bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ **I will** bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you **I will** curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The words, “I will,” are our consolation! This is Amazing Grace!

The nature of the gospel is a promise, a free promise of life and salvation through Christ, as Paul declares here in Gal. 3:8. Our great hope and consolation is in the fact that we have a Promise-keeping God!

When we are overwhelmed with our sin and failure, we must, like Abraham, trust in God who will fulfill what He has promised to us in the gospel. We must remember these assuring words, “I will.”

The gospel is the Good News of a God who has promised to be exceedingly gracious toward undeserving sinners. Such an authoritative, certain promise gives us hope in the midst of our ongoing battle with our sin and failure.

Thus, despite your ongoing failure and sin, God has promised in the gospel to forgive your sins, count you righteous in His sight, grant you eternal life and bring you into His family as His beloved children. This promise is certain and trustworthy because it is based on divinely revealed, authoritative truth.

“**I will** not remove from him My steadfast love or be false to My faithfulness. **I will** not violate My covenant or alter the word that went forth from My lips,” (Ps. 89:33-34).

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