

## Lesson 10 – Galatians 3:6-9

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### Review/Introduction

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The true gospel is the message of God's grace, not human works.

“Grace” is God's sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”.

Paul greeted the Galatians and started right into their correction and his attack on the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel of Christ.

<sup>6</sup>I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different gospel**; <sup>7</sup>which is *really* not another; only there are some who are *disturbing* you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ**. (Galatians 1:6-7)

He then went on to show that the true gospel that he preached was not learned from other people nor found in Scripture-invalidating tradition nor did he invent it. He received it directly from the Lord Jesus. This is the same as us since we have received the gospel from the God through His word. He presented the authentication of the Gospel through the source (God) and its power (persecutor to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ).

### ❖ **Does your life authenticate the gospel?**

Paul made it clear that the great doctrinal truth of justification leaves no room for law/works because it treats grace disdainfully; it makes Christ sacrifice as needless.

In chapter three, Paul begins the doctrinal section of the letter, looking at the defense of justification by faith. Paul began by asking five questions of the Galatians which drove home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. These questions were meant to stir the thoughtless Galatians (and us) to think seriously about the gospel.

Paul began by showing the Galatian believers that they had a true spiritual experience because they had received the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup>You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? <sup>2</sup>This is the only thing I want to find out from you: **did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** <sup>4</sup>Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup>So then, **does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** (Galatians 3:1-5)

The Galatians' experience demonstrated justification by grace through faith alone and not law. Now Paul will turn to the Scriptures to support justification by faith alone.

## Paul's defense of justification by faith – The example of Abraham's salvation (3:6-9)

### 1. Old Testament salvation (3:6)

<sup>6</sup>Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

<sup>6</sup>just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? (ESV)

Paul just put an exclamation point on his questions that pointed to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not the works of the law. The Judaizers would have thought, “nice try, but keeping the law of Moses is necessary for salvation.”

To support his rhetorical questions, Paul refers to the example of Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, and his relationship to the law as presented in Genesis 15. How was Abraham justified? Was it by circumcision? No, was not yet given to Abraham. Was it by Law? No, the Law was not yet written. What do the Scriptures say about how Abraham was justified?

Abram is introduced at the end of Genesis 11 with the genealogies after the flood. The genealogies of Genesis teach us important truths. They show and teach us that God is immanent and sovereign and faithful to bring about the promised Messiah of Genesis 3:15.

<sup>14</sup>The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; <sup>5</sup>And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; **He shall bruise you on the head**, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:14-15)

It should be noted that there were many in the Old Testament prior to Abraham who were saved by grace through faith: Adam and Eve (Genesis 4), Abel (Hebrews 11:4), Seth and Enosh (Genesis 4:26), Enoch (Genesis 5:22-24; Hebrews 11:5), Noah (Hebrews 11:7), Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:26-27), etc. Yet, Abraham is unique because God chose him to be the father of His literal people and the spiritual father or example of all those who would exercise the gift of saving faith.

God in Genesis 12 called Abram. Interestingly, he obeyed, but it does not yet say that this is credited with righteousness. Doing something the Bible says does not mean you have exercised saving faith. We will see an example of this later.

<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup>And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup>And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” <sup>4</sup>**So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him;** and Lot went with him. (Genesis 12:1-4)

It is not until Genesis 15 that we see Abram’s faith called out.

<sup>5</sup>And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” <sup>6</sup>**Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.** <sup>7</sup>And He said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.” (Genesis 15:5-7)

This verse is quoted or alluded to many times throughout the rest of Scripture. The reason is clear, Abraham's faith was clearly independent of any works. He simply bowed before God and trusted Him alone.

<sup>9</sup>Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "**Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.**" (Romans 4:9)

<sup>18</sup>In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>19</sup>Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; <sup>20</sup>yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

<sup>22</sup>**Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness.** (Romans 4:18-22)

<sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "**And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,**" and he was called the friend of God. (James 2:23)

Abraham's faith was credited to his account as righteousness. But what about circumcision? Abram was not given circumcision until Genesis 17.

<sup>10</sup>This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup>And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Genesis 17:10-11)

What about keeping the law? The law did not come until just after the exodus from Egypt, long after Abraham had died.

<sup>17</sup>What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. (Galatians 3:17)

So, Abraham was not saved by works (circumcision or keeping the Law), but by faith alone.

❖ **Do you look to good works or abstaining from evil as a means to closeness to God?**

## 2. Old Testament and New Testament salvation (3:7)

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

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<sup>7</sup>Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. (ESV)

"Be sure" means to know or realize. This always points to a truth that readers should have realized but somehow missed. The Galatians should have known, because the Scriptures declare it, that faith alone saves. But they missed it.

❖ **Spend some time evaluating the kinds of things in your life that may have "missed"?**

The Judaizers believed and taught that only the circumcised were children of Abraham. Paul now makes it clear that there are physical descendants of Abraham and there are spiritual descendants of Abraham through faith.

<sup>1</sup>What then shall we say that Abraham, **our forefather according to the flesh**, has found?  
<sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:1-3)

Let us look at John 8 to see how the Jews viewed Abraham.

<sup>30</sup>As He spoke these things, *many came to believe in Him*. <sup>31</sup>So *Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him*, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered Him, “**We are Abraham’s descendants** and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup>I know that you are **Abraham’s** descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup>I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

<sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, “**Abraham** is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are **Abraham’s** children, do the deeds of **Abraham**. <sup>40</sup>But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this **Abraham** did not do. <sup>41</sup>You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. <sup>44</sup>You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup>Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, because you are not of God.”

<sup>48</sup>The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. <sup>50</sup>But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. <sup>51</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” <sup>52</sup>The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. **Abraham** died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ <sup>53</sup>Surely You are not greater than our father **Abraham**, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?” <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; <sup>55</sup>and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. <sup>56</sup>Your father **Abraham** rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.” <sup>57</sup>So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen **Abraham**?” <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before **Abraham** was born, I am.” <sup>59</sup>Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:31-59)

The Judaizers are just like the Jews in John 8 who missed the connection to Abraham through faith and instead were thinking only of the flesh.

❖ **In what ways does your connection to Christ through faith make your life different than non-believers?**

3. The blessing of faith (3:8-9)

<sup>8</sup>The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” <sup>9</sup>So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

<sup>8</sup>And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” <sup>9</sup>So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (ESV)

Paul had just appealed to the Galatians’ salvation experience of Holy Spirit baptism as a remembrance that they had received the Spirit by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and NOT by works (Galatians 3:1-5). Then he appealed to the Scriptural example of Abraham who was justified by faith before circumcision and keeping the Law were even given to Abraham and his physical descendants.

❖ **To what do you appeal in your discussions? Do you back up experience with Scripture?**

“The Scripture” is personified as foreseeing that God’s plan was to save the Gentiles by faith. This promise is given to Abraham, but is recorded by Moses through the Holy Spirit. It is a prophesy of God’s salvation plan.

<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup>And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup>And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. **And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.**” <sup>4</sup>So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. (Genesis 12:1-4)

God to Abraham after offering Isaac... <sup>15</sup>Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, <sup>16</sup>and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

<sup>18</sup>**In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:18)

But who actually spoke to Abraham? In Genesis 22:18 it was the “angel of the Lord”. The best way to understand the “angel of the Lord” is Christ Himself. These appearances of the angel of the Lord recorded in the OT are called “theophanies”. This word comes from two Greek words THEOS (“God”) and PHAINO (“to appear”). This is an appearance of God, usually in visible, bodily form. A theophany is not a vision.

Christ preached the gospel to Abraham concerning Himself (“your seed”, see Galatians 3:16).

“Preached the gospel beforehand” is a compound word that means to proclaim the gospel before, to spread good news in advance of it actually coming to pass. The word is only found in Galatians 3:8. The usage indicates that God Himself preached the good news which we see as a theophany of Christ.

We do not know all that Christ told Abraham, but we do know that He told Abraham about his seed. Abraham’s seed was the fulfillment of the protoevangelium in Genesis 3:14-15.

The Gentiles were to receive a specific blessing through Abraham’s seed.

James at the Jerusalem Council... <sup>13</sup>After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me. <sup>14</sup>Simeon has related how **God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.** <sup>15</sup>With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, <sup>16</sup>‘After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, <sup>17</sup>So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ (Acts 15:13-17; v16-17 quoting Amos 9:11-12)

<sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3)

<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-7)

The summary statement for these four verses puts a point on Paul’s argument against the Judaizers. Only “those who are of faith” are blessed with Abraham, the one who believed.

❖ **In what specific ways are you blessed with Abraham the believer?**

## Conclusion

The Galatians are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul began this doctrinal section of the letter by asking five questions of the Galatians driving home the point that they did not receive spiritual baptism through works of the law, but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Now he gave a Scriptural argument from Abraham’s pre-circumcision and Law justification by faith.

## Additional Study

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today’s Questions
  - Take some time and look up all the passages that speak to Abraham’s faith being reckoned to him as righteousness.
  - Read Hebrews 11. What do people of faith have in common?
  - In what ways has your faith grown stronger since the time you surrendered to Christ?
  - Are there biblical promises that you do not believe (maybe like Philippians 4:6-7)? How might you change that and grow stronger in faith.
  - Investigate through the New Testament in what ways you are blessed with Abraham the believer.