

Series: Galatians

Title: Blessed with Faithful Abraham

Text: Galatians 3: 6-9

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Those who opposed Paul's gospel used the same argument as those who oppose us. They insist that the works of the law must be added to faith in Christ. Judaizers then and now are really saying that though it is necessary to believe the gospel, the gospel is not sufficient unless works of the law are added.

Legalists make works of the law a necessity for a justifying righteousness or a sanctifying righteousness. They add many man-made commands as well, including church creeds from the past that their members must adhere to. When it comes down to it, they always choose their church creed over the scriptures. Pharisee's are always examining others; always pointing out faults; always bringing others under censor. It is bondage. But whatever the purpose for which they make the believer's works a necessity, their argument amounts to the same thing—CHRIST IS NOT ENOUGH!

A so-called faith born out of carnal reason and logic and mental assent cannot believe the gospel. Natural man requires a sign as did the unbelieving Jews (1 Cor 1:22). Believers have the sign our Savior spoke of—we know we are complete because Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification (Mt 16:4; Rom 4:25; Col 2: 10). But Christ is a stumblingblock to the will-worker. It is because without the Spirit of God a carnally religious man needs outward works which they can see by carnal sight. So it was not enough to the Judaizers that the Gentiles professed faith in Christ. They insisted that in addition to faith, the believing Gentiles must be circumcised and live in adherence to the law of Moses. The apostle Peter spoke very boldly when he declared that, not only were none of their Jewish father's able to keep the law, but Peter also called it tempting God.

Acts 15: 10: Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

True believers are not justified by the works of the law nor are we made holy by the law. We do not grow in holiness by works of the law. Nor do we live under the law. The law only speaks to the lawless but has nothing to say to those made righteous in Christ (1 Tim 1:5-11). We walk in the Spirit by faith, not by law and not in the flesh.

In fact, the Spirit of God declares through Paul that it is an utter impossibility to live by law and live by faith—"The just shall live by faith and the law is not of faith" (Gal 3: 11-12). God's elect are justified by Christ by his faithfulness. His righteousness is imputed to us through God-given faith in Christ. Therefore, once born of the Spirit we walk after the Spirit living by faith in Christ through the hearing of Christ's faithfulness preached in the gospel. Christ is our Husband to whom we submit and obey as a faithful bride. If we go to back to the law it would be to leave our new Husband and go back to our first husband who is now dead (Rom 7: 1-6). The law of God endorses our union with Christ as being a lawful and righteous union. Therefore, everything about our walk we learn looking to Christ.

Believing this good news, we are accused of being against the law—antinomian. They insist the believer is yet under the ten commandments as the believer's rule of life. They require works of the law to accompany faith. Since we do not bring believers back under law, they say we are against the law. To the contrary, God's saints are the only ones who are not against the law. We know the law is established only by Christ. We do not pretend as the legalists that an outward show of obedience is truly establishing the law. God's saints have a sin-nature. Therefore, sin is mixed with all we do. Therefore, none but Christ ever kept the law.

It is not the law of Sinai that God writes on the new heart. It is the covenant of grace. The statutes are the law of faith, the law of love (also called the law of Christ), the law of liberty, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The believer's rule of life is faith which worketh by love (Gal 5:6). The love of Christ and the law of Sinai are two separate constraints entirely.

Brethren, when you are confronted by men who accuse you of being against the law given at Sinai, remember our text. The Spirit of God teaches us that Abraham is the one that best illustrates how a

believer is justified through faith in Christ and lives his life by faith in Christ. The father of the faithful lived 430 years before the law at Sinai was given. Abraham did not have the ten commandments. How then did he live? What was his rule of life?

Galatians 3: 5: He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 6: Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7: 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. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 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. 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. 12: And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13: 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: 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.

Brethren, I pray we never think of this as a doctrine that we have learned so that now we can move on to other things. Legalism and self-righteousness are struggles we face every day. We so easily turn from Christ to our flesh and our works: by comparing ourselves with ourselves, by judging, by becoming critical and doubtful of brethren, by using scripture to whip instead of build-up. We far too quickly question another's faith based on outward things when we do not know the heart. Doing so we bring ourselves back under the law and into bondage. Thankfully, the Spirit of God will not allow one in whom he dwells to remain there but will mortify that sinful flesh. When he shows us that only the Spirit of God can make us put off the old man then we learn a little more of what it is to live by faith rather than law.

Proposition: God made Abraham the father of true believers to show us that every believer is justified the same way as Abraham and we live our lives under the same rule as Abraham.

WHAT WAS ABRAHAM WHEN GOD CALLED HIM?

The Judaizers boasted they were God's children because they were the children of Abraham. But Abraham was not a Jew when Christ came to him. God did not form the nation Israel until 430 years later when he called them out of Egyptian bondage and entered the covenant of works with them at Sinai.

The Judaizers insisted on outward circumcision and keeping of the law of Sinai as a necessity for believers, especially Gentile believers. But Abraham was not circumcised outwardly until 15 years after God circumcised him in the heart. And the law of Sinai was not given until 430 years after Abraham died. Abraham certainly did not begin by works of the law nor did he live under the law of Sinai. He did not have the law of Sinai. That covenant of works did not exist for him. Neither does it exist for all who believe on Christ and rest in him (Heb 7:12-19).

When God came to Abraham he was a spiritually dead sinner worshipping idols. That is where he would have stayed. He would have remained a dead sinner worshipping idols but for God's free and sovereign grace. But because God chose Abraham in Christ before the world began therefore God came to Abraham and preached the gospel to him (Gal 3:8).

HOW DID GOD MINISTER THE SPIRIT TO ABRAHAM?

The apostle Paul asked the question, "*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" However Christ sent the Spirit of God to us in the beginning is how we continue to maturity. So did God minister the Spirit to Abraham by the hearing of works? Was it by works Abraham was required to do? Or was it by the hearing of faith? It was by the hearing of the faithful works of God. We find the answer in Genesis 12.

Genesis 12: 1: Now the LORD had said unto Abram,...

Abraham's spiritual life began by the God of glory coming to Abraham. God spoke and ministered the Holy Spirit to Abraham through the Lord's word of grace. The Lord preached before the gospel unto Abraham. That is the only means through which Christ sends the Holy Spirit of God into a dead sinner. It is the only through the preaching of the gospel that a dead sinner is regenerated to spiritual life (1 Cor 1:21; Rom 10: 13-17). The only way a defiled sinner is given a new, holy pure heart, ears to hear, and a heart to believe is by Christ sending the gospel to him, sending the Holy Spirit to regenerate through the Word. It is not by our works—"*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" Likewise this is how God's saints continue unto the day Christ calls us home.

WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE?

Was it the hearing of works? Did God require Abraham do certain works before God would minister the Spirit to him? Or was the message the hearing of faith? It was the promise of the gospel declaring what God would do for Abraham. It was the hearing of faith! Notice God's "I will's" and the result being "thou shalt."

Genesis 12: 1: Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4: So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him;

This blessing God promised was yes and amen in the person and work of Christ, the promised Seed. As we read the following make sure you are using a King James translation. The word "seed" is of utmost importance because it speaks of Christ. Most modern translation have replaced this word and totally removed Christ from the original.

Genesis 15: 1: After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward...5: And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6: And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 21: 12:...in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Genesis 22:17: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

Now, listen to the Spirit of God declare to us that the "Seed" is Christ.

Galatians 3:16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

So Abraham was called by *the hearing of faith*. The Lord preached Christ and him crucified to Abraham. The Mediator ministered the Holy Spirit to Abraham by the gospel which promised to Abraham that God would save him and his spiritual children in and by Christ the Seed. We are the seed of Abraham, who are brought to faith in Christ, by Christ the Seed making us righteous in him. Abraham heard God promise to freely give him the blessing of an eternal inheritance which Abraham did not work for. Our Savior himself declared, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

WHAT WAS THE RESULT?

What was the result of Christ sending the gospel and the Holy Spirit to Abraham? Our text says, "*Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.*" It is not the letter of the law that Abraham obeyed, it was God himself. He believed on Christ his Righteousness. It was not his flesh that obeyed. It was in the new spirit by the Spirit of Christ that made Abraham willing to obey by believing on Christ. The obedience of faith in Abraham was manifest this way:

Genesis 12: 4: So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him;

We know his departing was the fruit of the Spirit, the obedience of faith, because scripture declares it:

Hebrews 11: 8: BY FAITH Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

As the message went forth, God ministered to Abraham the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit regenerated and sanctified Abraham like he did us, brethren. God gave him a pure, holy heart so that he believed God. The Spirit of God set him apart in heart and set him apart from his country and kinsman so that Abraham obeyed and went into a foreign land. Abraham lived by faith. By faith Abraham saw Christ the promised Seed and believed on him. Through faith God imputed the righteousness of Christ to Abraham. With Christ as his Surety, Abraham was justified from all his sins and made the righteousness of God in Christ. In Christ his Surety, Abraham was dead to the law and alive unto God and walked by faith—dead to the law in the garden, dead to the law of Sinai though it was not yet given. And that is how Abraham continued to live all his days, by faith living unto God.

Galatians 3: 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. 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. 12: And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Having begun in the Spirit how did Abraham live and walk? He did not have the ten commandments so what was his rule of life? God continued to preach the gospel to Abraham, declaring the works God would do for him. Abraham's rule was *the hearing of faith, the hearing of God's works in Christ, the hearing of the promise of God.*

Genesis 12: 6: And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7: And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. 8: And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. 9: And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

The Spirit of Christ continued to work in Abraham's heart so that Abraham lived and walked by faith all his days. In Abraham we see what it is to live by faith. Remember, the law was not given for 430 years. Abraham was dead to the law that he might live unto God. He was led of the Spirit, ruled by Christ, guided by the Spirit into all truth. Therefore, he lived and walked by faith.

Hebrews 11: 9: By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

Through the preaching of the gospel, Abraham was justified with Christ's righteousness imputed to him through faith, apart from Abraham's works. By the same gospel, by the same Spirit of Christ, Abraham lived and walked by faith. Christ lived in him and ruled his heart. The ten commandments were not even given. That is why God holds Abraham up as the father of the faithful. It is to show us a pattern. This is how every believer is saved and how we live and walk by faith. Even before Christ laid down his life, in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Abraham could say with Paul and with you and I who believe:

Galatians 2: 19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20: I am crucified with Christ: 20: Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

The Spirit of Christ made Abraham obedient even against his greatest fleshly desires. Obeying God is bearing great crosses which are contrary to our flesh. Our sinful flesh is a legal Pharisee. But by faith Abraham denied himself when God commanded him to offer up Isaac. In his heart, Abraham really sacrificed his beloved Isaac at the command of God. God made Abraham faithful to bear witness of

Christ. He said, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb.” Look how he loved Lot. He gave Lot choice of the best land to prevent hard feelings. Then Abraham risked his life to save Lot. The sinful things were of Abraham’s sinful flesh just like ours. But the good works were by Christ working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

THE APPLICATION

Galatians 3: 7: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

The Judaizers boasted that Abraham was their father and that is why they were saved. Paul declares that they were not children of Abraham because they insisted on returning to the law of Sinai and their works. Only those who are of faith are true, spiritual children of Abraham. Being physical descendants of Abraham guaranteed no spiritual blessing to Jews (Matt. 3:9). And being the physical descendants of godly (believing) parents secures no spiritual blessing to any today (John 1:11- 13).

Then he applies it to God’s elect Gentiles which includes us,

Galatians 3: 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. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The scripture *foresaw*—meaning it foretold. We read in Genesis 15, “the Word came to Abraham.” Christ the living Word came to him. He came declaring the end from the beginning. God says I purposed it, I will also do it.

The scripture declared “*God would justify.*” Whoever is justified from our sins, it is God that justifies, apart from our works:

Romans 3: 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

God said he would justify the heathen through faith. So the Lord preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” In Christ shall all God’s elect in every nation be blessed. That is the gospel. God promised Abraham that in Christ and by Christ God would save his elect from among all nations and families of the earth—even us Gentiles who, like Abraham, were never under the law at Sinai.

Believer, understand that the law given at Sinai is another covenant which the Hebrew writer says is disannulled. Men will say the ten commandments are still in effect. Indeed, they are for the lawless and disobedient! But not for those made righteous in Christ. We love the law and delight in it in our inward man. We would keep all the commandments were it not for our sinful flesh making evil to be present when we would do good. But Christ established or fulfilled the things written in that covenant and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross. He removed every ordinance—every moral commandment—that was against us. He removed them by fulfilling them, dying under their curse in our place. The law has nothing else to say to a man it has executed—that is every child of God in Christ.

We are under a new covenant of grace. We have a new High Priest, a new Lamb, a new Tabernacle and our new statute is faith which works by love. How much clearer can God be than to say to his child you are dead to the law, you are not under the law, you are under the covenant of grace.

It means through faith in Christ we have established the entire law of Sinai. In Christ we never broke the law in Adam. We have not made the law void through faith as we are accused by legalists. No, through faith we have established the law exactly as Abraham did (Rom 3:31-4:6). We are righteous and COMPLETE in Christ (Col 2: 10). Our motive is not law. It is Christ in you constraining you by love to live to Christ himself. He leads you by the Spirit of God by which we walk. We learn what to do in every situation by looking to Christ.

But turning to law—the letter and to our works—be it in the old testament scripture or the new—we turn from Christ to the works of our hands. It is impossible to do otherwise because the law is not of faith. If our motive is legal—compelling and making something but Christ a necessity for any part of salvation—then it is no more by grace. We must abide in Christ because Christ said without him we can do nothing. Our union is as the vine and the branches. Christ commands us to abide in him and he abides in us which keeps us abiding in him. Christ is Holiness and from Christ we walk in holiness. He said only those who abide in him bring forth much fruit. And we, the branch, bear fruit only from Christ, the Vine. He give us the Spirit as the vine gives sap to the branch so that believers bear fruit from the Spirit of Christ in us (Jn 15: 4-5). “Being filled with fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Php 1: 11).

But to turn to the law of Sinai as a necessity for any part of salvation or as a requirement of salvation is to turn to our works and our flesh. To go to any part of scripture in the oldness of the letter, making our works contribute to Christ’s, is law. It is to go to another vine which is intended to produce another kind of fruit: dead fruit. It would be like a peach branch grafted into a thorn bush. No fruit. Paul said by our works under the law we only brought forth dead fruit; fruit of which we are ashamed now.

It is only by Christ the Vine that his branches bear fruit. When we look to Christ through faith we find we have no sin—the law can never condemn us or even charge us with sin. When we look at ourselves and our so-called law-obedience we find nothing but sin—we cannot keep the law of Sinai—only Christ kept it. He rebukes us in heart, showing us our sin in light of his Righteousness. This is how Christ renews our inward man to make us willing to mortify our flesh. This is how Christ keeps us abiding in him by faith.

Looking to Christ we are taught how to love one another. But when we compare ourselves with ourselves we are either cast down by our sin or puffed up in self-righteousness. It is what we are doing when we are imputing a charge to brethren, unforgiving and hard, rather than restoring in the spirit of meekness. It is exalting self in self-righteousness. Christ is the righteousness of the law for us and Christ is the Power who rules our life keeping us looking to him in humble faith and serving by love. The motive of the heart is of Christ—only God makes us to differ.

Amen!