

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

TEXT: GALATIANS 3:6-9

Introduction:

1. I mentioned in my message Sunday morning that Abraham is referred to 311 times in the Bible -- 237 times in the Old Testament, and 74 times in the New Testament.
2. Abraham is mentioned nine times in the book of Galatians (cf. 3:6-9).
3. Abraham is referred to as "faithful Abraham" (3:9), i.e., "believing Abraham" (Scofield margin).
4. This means Abraham was "full of faith."
5. The theme of this epistle is we are saved by grace through faith, not the law. Abraham could not be saved by keeping the law because Abraham lived over 400 years before God gave the law to Moses.
6. This is taught several times in the New Testament (cf. Romans 4:1-5; Hebrews 11:8-19).
7. In Galatians 3:6, the apostle Paul is quoting Genesis 15:6 -- "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted (or "imputed") it to him for righteousness." "Impute" is an accounting term which means to count, or put to someone's account (cf. Rom. 4:16-25).
8. This is the principle of justification by faith.
9. Our Lord said in John 5:24, "Verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."
10. Therefore, we are justified -- shall not come into condemnation -- by faith. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life..."
11. It has been pointed out that being justified is more than merely escaping condemnation. Jonathan Edwards said, "A person is to be *justified*, when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life."
12. Edwards is referring to Christ's imputed righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "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."

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTIFICATION ESTABLISHED (3:6).

1. The apostle Paul has established that God's dealings with the Galatians were based entirely on the principle of faith.

2. Men were saved in Abraham's day the same way men are saved today -- by faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).
3. Paul could use Abraham as an example of a believer justified by faith because the Judaizers were insisting that circumcision was necessary for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1; Galatians 5:1-12).
4. However, Abraham was saved before he was circumcised. His willingness to submit to circumcision was evidence that he was already trusting in God (Gen. 15:6; 17:9-11, 23-27).
5. This was before the birth of Isaac. Abraham believed God even though God's promise was still unfulfilled.
6. Here in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul is establishing the principle of justification by faith -- not by works.
7. Justification is the act whereby God declares righteous those who believe in Him.
8. God declares us righteous. Not God makes us righteous -- that is sanctification.
9. God can properly deal with guilty hell-deserving sinners in this way because they have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for their sins.
10. God gives the repentant sinner a righteous standing, which makes him fit for heaven, not on the basis of works, but on the basis of faith (3:6).

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTIFICATION APPLIED (3:7).

1. The Judaizers were very proud of their physical descent from Abraham.
2. John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:9).
3. Jesus warned the Pharisees that there was a big difference between those who were Abraham's seed physically, and those who were Abraham's seed spiritually.
4. They boasted in John 8:33, "We be Abraham's seed."
5. Our Lord told them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham" (John 8:39, 40).
6. The Judaizers taught that in order to be true sons of Abraham, the Galatians needed to be circumcised. Today the SDA cult teaches Christians must keep the sabbath.

7. Other churches say baptism is necessary for salvation. All of this is contrary to Scripture (cf. Romans 4:1-10).
8. Abraham was saved as an uncircumcised heathen. He was circumcised after he was saved.
9. This is the principle of justification by faith established and applied.
10. Now let us look at the principle extended.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTIFICATION EXTENDED (3:8).

1. The blessing promised to the Gentiles was announced to Abraham back in Genesis 12:3, "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."
2. The principle of justification by faith was extended to "all families of the earth." All the families of the earth, all the nations of the earth, all the tribes, all the people groups, will all be blessed the same way God blessed Abraham -- by faith.
3. All nations shall be blessed (3:8, 9) means the Messiah was to be descended from Abraham.
4. The heathen (Gentiles) nations would be saved the same way Abraham was saved -- by faith, not by the law (cf. Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 14:6).

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTIFICATION EXPERIENCED (3:9).

1. All those who exercise faith in God are "blessed with faithful ("full of faith") Abraham," according to the testimony of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
2. This is the principle of justification by faith experienced.
3. Have you experienced this blessing?

CONCLUSION:

1. A man was trying to defend the false doctrine of justification by faith plus works. He used an illustration of two men sitting in a rowboat arguing.
2. One argued for justification by faith, not works. The other insisted that one could only be justified by his good works.
3. According to this man's illustration, the boatman settled the argument by saying, "It is like this: I have two oars. I will call one "Faith," and the other I will call "WORKS."
4. "If I pull only on this oar the boat will go around and round in circles, and we will get nowhere. And if I pull only on the other oar, the same thing will happen.
5. "But if pull on both oars, we will get across the lake."

6. The man thought he had won the debate by using this picturesque illustration.
7. However, the man he was debating was unimpressed. He replied, "That is a very nice story. But my friend, nobody goes to heaven in a rowboat!"