

## The Faith Of Abraham

Galatians 3:1-9

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you<sup>[b]</sup> as crucified? <sup>2</sup> This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? <sup>5</sup> Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? - <sup>6</sup> just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” <sup>7</sup> Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” <sup>9</sup> So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

**The Epistle of Paul to the Galatian churches was written to correct a serious error.** Paul had taught that **salvation was by the grace of God, and that we are also kept by the grace of God.** But certain false teachers had come who denied this Gospel of grace. **They insisted that while saved by grace, we are then kept by our own works.** As a result these Galatians had **lost their assurance** and gone back to **the bondage of the law.**

This was more than Paul could comprehend, as seen in verse 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you ... " Barclay translates Paul's statement this way, "You senseless Galatians ... " The New English Bible says, "You stupid Galatians ... " In any case, it seems that it is hard for Paul to believe that anyone would turn again to "justification by works" when Christ has paid the price through grace and love.

**To prove that we are not saved or kept by the works of the law, Paul then refers them to the history of Abraham.** How was Abraham

saved? How was Abraham kept? By the Law? Impossible, for Abraham knew nothing about the Law. He lived four hundred years before the law was given. How then was Abraham saved and kept? Paul's answer is given in verse 6, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." This same truth is seen in Romans 4:3 where we have been told that "... Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness."

Notice that in both passages it is said, "Abraham believed God." It does *not* say that he "believed *in* God," but that he "believed God." There is a vast difference between *in* God and *believing* God. The Bible tells us that even the demons believe *in* God. Psalm 14:1 says only the fool says "there is no God." Listen to me very carefully, a man may believe *in* God, but unless he *believes* God, he is still lost. To believe God is to accept His *Son*, and to trust His *promises*. Just believing in the *existence of God* is not enough. We must believe what He says. The only book that contains His promises is the Bible, so that believing God is believing *His Word*.

Abraham believed what God said. Therefore, the vital question is, "What did Abraham believe?" We have the answer given in Genesis 15, from which Paul quotes in Galatians 3. Genesis 15 is the great faith chapter of the Old Testament, just as Hebrews 11 is of the New Testament. In the record of Abraham we have the complete story of the Gospel, as seen in verse 8, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

The Gospel that God preached to Abraham centers around a promised son, Isaac; his birth, his death, and his resurrection. Isaac was a type of Jesus. He was a picture of His virgin birth, a picture of His death when Abraham took him to Mount Moriah, and a picture of Christ in His resurrection when God called to Abraham to spare his son.

This truth is seen in 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." **Abram had just returned from his great victory over the four kings of the north, and he had delivered Lot and his family and the five other kings.** Now he becomes afraid, and fears that the kings against whom he fought will come back for revenge later on. Moreover, he had refused to take any of the spoil, and this too may have troubled him. It is then that the Lord comes to encourage him, and says, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield." That is, "Don't be afraid, Abram, for I will be your protector." Then the Lord adds, "and thy exceeding great reward." God seems to say, "You have refused the wealth of the spoils of the king of Sodom, but I Myself will be your reward."

**To this promise of God, Abram made a strange reply.** He tells God he is not so sure that he can believe God, since another promise God had made previously to him had not yet been fulfilled. It was the promise that God had made many, many years before, and which up until now He had not fulfilled. **God had promised Abram a son by Sara his wife.** The years had slipped by, and it was now thirty years since. God had promised this son whom Abram desired so much.

Therefore, in Genesis 15:2-3 Abram reminds God of this and says, " ... Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, 10, one born in my house is mine heir."

**Abram complains bitterly that the promise of a seed has not been kept.** But the Lord immediately reassures Abram, saying, "... This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own lions shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward the heaven, heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

**Now what did God ask Abraham to believe?** He asked him to believe what he said concerning a promised son. But more than that, God asked him to believe in, a long-promised son, a long-delayed son, a miraculously born, and a supernaturally given son. **God asked Abram to believe the humanly impossible, the naturally unreasonable and the miraculously supernatural.** When God repeated this promise to Abram he was one hundred years old, and his wife Sara was ninety. They had both long since passed the time of life when they, in the ordinary course of nature, could expect to become parents of a child. **The Bible said that Abram's body was "dead," as far as procreation was concerned.** Sara had long since passed time of life for childbearing, and was maternally dead. It would therefore take a miracle to give them a child. It would have to be supernatural.

But we are told in Romans 4:18-22 this about Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

**Here this is the divine record itself.** Abraham's body was dead; Sarah's womb was dead. Unless a miracle happened, they could have no children. **But God still promised a son and Abraham believed God's promise, even though it meant a miracle: and this faith saved him.** The birth of Isaac was as great a miracle as the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he was a type. Abraham believed God's Word concerning this son, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.

**What was true of Abraham is true today!** *Salvation* and *justification* still come by believing God's Word concerning His Son, His miraculously conceived, supernaturally born, Son. That is what

John says in 1 John 5:9-10, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

**The truth here is as clear as it can be stated: salvation is believing what God says about His Son Jesus Christ.** God knows of no other way of redemption for lost humanity!

**Therefore, the all-important question is: Have you believed on the Son of God?** If you have, then you are saved. If you have not, then you are still in your sin. **What is needed is not reason, not feeling, not emotion, but faith!** Moreover, received no visions, emotions, or fleshly sensation, nothing but the promise of God in His Word. And this is God's way to salvation, for Paul ends the chapter on Abraham's faith in his epistle to the Romans with these important words in Romans 4:23-25, "Now it, was not written for his (that is, Abraham's) sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord· from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."