

LAW, LIBERTY, AND LIFE IN JESUS - Knowing How it all Works

Part nine - Teaching #2145

Sunday, December 5th, 2021 - 10 a.m.

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HOW 21ST CENTURY, NON-JEWISH CANADIANS CAN BECOME CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM AND INHERIT ALL HIS BLESSINGS

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:6-9 - "...just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness? [7] You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons. [8] Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you. [9] Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith."

I hope you can think back to some of the earlier studies in this series. It will help you to see the way Paul unfolds his argument against the false teachers who were trying to lure these Galatian believers back under the yoke of ethnic Judaism. Paul makes his case against them by proving justification by ***faith plus nothing else***. And he marshals his argument on ***three different fronts***:

First, Paul shows them that the gospel he preached lined up with the leadership at Jerusalem (**2:1-10**). This was particularly amazing given the fact that he hadn't conversed with any of these leaders in advance (**1:17**).

Second, Paul shows them that his gospel of justification by faith alone, plus nothing else, lined up with their own **experience** of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts (**3:1-5**). Most of these converts were Gentiles. They had never even studied the laws of ethnic Judaism. Yet they were born again. They knew they had experienced the regenerating work of the Spirit of God in their hearts. This was proof that justification came by faith in Christ Jesus and not the works of the law.

Now, third, Paul shows them that his gospel of justification by faith alone lines up with their own Old Testament Scriptures, and particularly their Father in Israel, Abraham himself (**3:6-9**).

Here is the central claim that Paul is going to make from this text. It's a precious word from the Lord and it applies tremendous benefits to every person listening to me. The central point is that whether you are male or female, black or white, rich or poor, Canadian or Korean, young or old, rich or poor, through faith in Jesus Christ you can be a child of Abraham and an heir to all that was promised to him if you live by faith.

This main point will be stated two ways, once in **verse 7** and once in **verse 9**. In each case the point is preceded by Old Testament support. This is very important for Paul because if there's one thing these Judaisers will endorse it's the Old Testament Scriptures. And if there's one person they will honor, it is Abraham.

So again, the main point in this text is that any person alive today, any person, regardless of race, culture, or sex, can be a child of Abraham through faith in Christ. How can this be? How can people who haven't a Jewish bone in their bodies be children of Abraham? And why does it matter, anyway? Why should people living in York Region, Ontario, in the year 2021, do anything other than yawn when told they can be children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ. Those are the two questions. ***How can this be?*** And, ***who cares?***

1) **BOTH JEWS AND NON-JEWS CAN BE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:7 & 9 - "You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons....[9] Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith."

The point is made by Paul twice in two verses. Those who are the descendants of Abraham are those who share his faith. Sonship to Abraham doesn't depend on physical descent. There is a ***huge*** teaching in the New Testament about the reality of ***spiritual Israel*** through faith in Jesus Christ and His justifying death on the cross - ***"...those who faith, these are Abraham's sons"***(7).

Paul repeats this truth over and over in his writings. It is obviously an important point to him - **Galatians 3:28-29 - “There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.” - IPAD TEXT**

How can this be? Is this just some new twist Paul put on the Scriptures to make them suit his own purpose? Most Jews reject the teaching of Paul in the New Testament. Was this actually in the heart and plan of God all along? Is there anything in the Old Testament itself that would lead us to this same conclusion?

Apparently there is, because Paul’s words in our text are largely taken from the actual call of Abraham recorded in the book of Genesis:

IPAD TEXT - Genesis 12:1-3 - “The Lord said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. [2] I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and *all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*”

These are important words. They teach that right from the beginning it was God's will to make sure Abram knew that the Jewish nation created through him was a people ***created for the world***. God never intended to merely ***bless the Jews*** so much as to use them to **be a blessing to all the nations of the earth**.

This is made even more clear in **Genesis 18:18 - "...Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him."** - IPAD TEXT

So obviously it was God's plan to bless the families and nations of the earth through Abraham and his descendants. But how does that relate to all of us becoming ***children*** of Abraham like Paul said? Is there any indication in the Old Testament that God's plan was to raise up ***children*** of Abraham from non-Jewish roots?

Yes there is:

IPAD TEXT - Genesis 17:4-5 - "As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the *father* of many nations. [5] Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the *father* of many nations."

Notice how that word “***father***” is used twice to describe the ***kind of relationship*** Abraham would have to these different nations and peoples. Abraham would become their ***father***. That means the people would become his ***children***. So these words in 17:4 describe the ***kind*** of blessing that would come to the nations through Abraham. They would become, exactly as Paul said, Abraham’s descendants.

In other words, the very ***calling*** of ethnic Israel was for the ***purpose*** of creating spiritual Israel. One was the ***means***. The other was the ***goal***. Now (and this is very important) that ***doesn’t*** mean God no longer has any specific plan for ethnic Israel. He does. Paul longed for a day, and the book of Revelation predicts such a day, when God will again come mightily and very specifically to ethnic Israel. He will come to them with a very specific purpose. He will call them to faith in Jesus Christ. Ethnic Israel will be re-grafted into the same tree with spiritual Israel:

IPAD TEXT - Romans 11:25-27 - “I don’t want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you will not be conceited: A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. [26] And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. [27] And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

2) JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, FAR FROM BEING A NEW CONCEPT, WAS THE KEY TO ABRAHAM'S RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:6 & 9 - "...just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness?...[9] Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith."

This is a stroke of sheer genius from Paul. The Judaisers honor Abraham. They are telling these new Christians in Galatia that Paul is calling people away from their Jewish roots. They are telling these Christians that Paul is playing fast and loose with the Old Testament law - that these new Christians need to come back to the outward regulations of circumcision and dietary regulations.

So Paul takes them back to their own Scriptures. He takes them back to the greatest patriarch of ethnic Judaism. And he says **they** are the ones missing what Abraham was all about.

Remember, Abraham, their Scriptures taught, was "**reckoned**" (or "**credited**") with righteousness because of his **faith**. True, Abraham **acted** on that faith in many specific steps of outward obedience.

Fair enough. “But,” says Paul, “he didn’t earn his righteousness **after** he did all those great things. He was **‘reckoned’** righteous first, right when he **believed**, before he did anything else.” His righteousness came from his faith.

Look carefully at Paul’s point here. Abraham predates circumcision. There was no circumcision when God called Abraham. And Abraham predates the law by hundreds of years. Yet God pronounces him righteous. **How did he get this righteousness?** One thing is for certain, he didn’t earn it through circumcision or the keeping of the Old Testament law. Abraham received his righteousness the same way Paul preached righteousness. He received it by **“believing God”** - by faith.

And Paul finally draws out the application of all of this to us:

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:9 - “Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.”

We are **blessed** with Abraham (we’ll look at the *content* of that blessing in a minute) when we share the **faith** of Abraham.

3) **BEING A CHILD OF ABRAHAM MEANS BEING LIKE ABRAHAM**

IPAD TEXT - John 8:39-40 - “Our father is Abraham,” they replied. “If you were Abraham’s children,” Jesus told them, “you would do what Abraham did. [40] But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.”

This passage is important for two reasons. First, Jesus shows by His words that there is a certain sense that these religious leaders are *not* descendants of Abraham, even though they are Jews, which underscores Paul’s point that being a true child of Abraham is not the same as mere Jewishness.

Second, Jesus shows us another dimension of what being a child of Abraham is all about. That is, being Abraham’s children entails *doing what Abraham did*. And, in the passage we’re studying from Galatians, what Abraham did was *believe God* - **Galatians 3:6 - “.... just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness? - IPAD TEXT**

We are like Abraham - we show our lineage to Abraham - when we trust in God. This was the very core of Paul's message. This is what brought about the conversion of those believers in Galatia. This was God's plan for the gospel all along - **John 3:16 - "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."** - IPAD TEXT

4) **AS ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN WE SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE AND BLESSING OF ABRAHAM**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:9 - "Consequently, those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith."

This point is made even more directly in verses we will study in detail in the future:

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:29 - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."

Now we come to the heart of the issue. Is there anything offered in this blessing of Abraham that should cause non-Jewish Canadians - people of different cultural and religious backgrounds - people living thousands of years after Abraham (and Paul for that matter) are long dead and gone? Why should anyone care about this text today?

We should care because there is something in this inheritance of Abraham that is geared to two of our greatest fears - the fear of death, and the fear of standing before an awesomely holy God buried in guilt and sin.

This is made clear in **verse 8** - **“Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would *justify the Gentiles by faith* and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, *All the nations will be blessed through you.*” - IPAD TEXT**

This verse makes clear that the blessing God wanted to spread to the nations through Abraham was the blessing of being ***justified***. That word **“*justified*”** is a legal word. It has to do with actual guilt before a judge.

It's not talking about the kind of guilt our therapeutic age is always bantering about. It's not talking about ***feelings*** of guilt. It's not talking about low ***self-image***. However debilitating these things may be, there is something far more damning that we must all come to terms with. We really ***are*** guilty before a holy God. This guilt is real and damning even if we don't ***feel*** it at all.

And we can't ***work*** our way out of it. We can never ***merit*** being let off the hook. And the meeting with our judge can't be ***postponed*** or ***avoided***. In other words, we all ***need*** justification.

And this is the greatest blessing of the descendants of Abraham. God planned to reach the nations through Abraham and his descendants. And He did just that through Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ, proclaimed by Paul, wasn't a **conflicting gospel** with the blessing of Abraham. Jesus said Abraham **"longed to see His day."**

One final point of caution. If these verses teach anything at all, they point to the nature of a sound, joyful faith before God. And they call us all to **live** by faith in Christ Jesus. We're not called just to **accept Christ by faith** and then leave it at that. Paul's words couldn't be clearer:

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

These verses scream a warning to all of us. It is **not** just a warning to Jews who rely on their Judaism for salvation. These verses call all of us for whom religion has become merely the **cultural expression of our lives**. They call us to cling to Christ Jesus in **living, dynamic, expressive, mind-burning, soul-searching faith**.

The Christian life can't be lived simply ***drawing*** on the religious relics of our parents' faith, or harkening back to some religious commitment made long ago - like those phone cards where you pay for time in advance. ***Faith is present, constant attachment to Christ***. Jesus said we were to ***abide in Him***.

Faith is a powerless joke without this. Crucify the flesh and the cultural expressions of the fallen world around you. Don't rely on the externals of the religious culture you've grown up with to save you. Put your trust in the provision for grace and justification Father God has provided through Jesus Christ, God the Son. That's how you walk and abound in the blessing of Abraham.