

A BRIEF COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TRUTHS IN ROMANS 4 AND GALATIANS 3

INTRODUCTION

Recall that soteriology is the doctrine of salvation: man is justified only by faith in Jesus Christ without adding the works or requirements of the Law.

In Galatians 3:1-5: Paul reminds the Galatian believers of their own life experience in the recent past by asking questions: "How were you saved: by faith or by the works of the Law?" This same doctrine was enlarged upon in Paul's Letter to the Romans. In Romans, however, Paul expressed the Divine side of its truth while in Galatians 3 he emphasized the human response; both tensions are necessary for salvation. In Romans, Paul he taught that God justifies believers by imputing on each one's account a rightness or righteousness that satisfied His justice. In Galatians 3, Paul taught that man receives this blessing simply by believing on Jesus Christ. The false teachers (Judaizers) had denied this and were attempting to lead the people in these Galatian churches to follow the Law of Moses as the basis of or part of the grounds for their justification (salvation) as well as the means of their perfection in holiness (sanctification). In Galatians 3, Paul addressed the untruthfulness and futility of this by pointing to their own experience of the effects of faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, the Galatian Christians received the Holy Spirit in answer to their faith in Christ, not through obedience to Law (3:1-5).

With respect to Abraham, he was justified by faith. According to Genesis 15:6: "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." Abraham believed what God had told him and this faith was imputed or counted to him as righteousness.

ABRAHAM IN ROMANS 4

In Romans 4, Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Christ, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. God provided salvation to His elect dependent upon faith in order that it might be available to both Jew and Gentile. Since Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers, this does away with the false Jewish notion that kinship to Abraham brings one into the divine favor and gives one salvation. By belonging to Christ, believers are also Abraham's posterity, for Christ is the seed of Abraham. Since believers have entered into relationship with Christ, they must consequently have a share in the same state, and must likewise be Abraham's seed.

The Jewish people gloried in human merit - but Abraham was justified by faith, not his own performance (4:1-8).

The Jewish males were circumcised - but Abraham was justified by faith, approximately about 14 years before he was circumcised (4:9-12).

The Jewish people gloried in the Law - but Abraham was promised that he would be the spiritual father of all nations; 430 years before the Law was given (4:13-17).

Being declared right with God requires the same quality of faith (believing God) as Abraham had (4:18-25).

GALATIANS 3

In chapters 3-4, Paul defended the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone without adding the works of the Law. This doctrine was against that taught by the Judaizers who believed that the works of the Law performed by an individual gave him/her acceptance with God.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ preached the gospel. Sinners who heard the gospel and believed in Christ repented and were baptized because of the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It was not necessary to reinstitute the religious ritual of male circumcision as a condition of salvation or a requirement of sanctification or fellowship in Christ, especially applicable to the non-Jewish followers of Christ. The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ made no requirement for those in Christ to practice Judaism, in whole or part. Christians were not obligated to keep the works of the Law of Moses.

Judaizers traveled to the Galatian region teaching Christians they needed to keep the works of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1). These men were preaching another gospel - and the believers in the Galatian churches were leaning toward following this false teaching (Galatians 1:6-9). So, the Apostle Paul addressed that problem with teaching he received from God (Galatians 1:12) proclaiming the truth summarized in Galatians 1:3-5.

ABRAHAM IN GALATIANS 3

In Galatians 3:6-14, Paul challenged his readers in the Galatians churches to better understand the promises made to Abraham. God promised Abraham, "In you all the nations shall be blessed," (Galatians 3:8, Genesis 12:3). Circumcision and the Law of Moses came after this promise, and did not annul or change it. "And this I say, that the Law, which was 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect" (Galatians 3:17). In summary, this may be one of the best studies you can get immersed in to understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament; grasping the significance of the promise made to Abraham and the fulfillment of that blessing in Christ.

"But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Galatians 3:22).

Here is the problem and solution:

The problem: "everyone under sin." The solution: "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." The solution is not found in Judaism, or in keeping the Law of Moses. The solution for justification (declared righteous before God) is the same as Abraham: believe. So, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation/justification. Every time the gospel is heard, believed, and obeyed - the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled; the promise that God would bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3).