

LSB Galatians 3:6 - 14

6 Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, 7 so know that those who are of faith, those are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; rather, "He who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

If we are born into a curse, born condemned in universal sinfulness, how is it that blessing and a right standing with God can be enjoyed. Or as Bildad so eloquently asked in the book of Job, *how can a man be right with God?*

Job 25:4

We've been working through Paul's logical progressive argument in this letter to the Galatians, and Paul is specifically arguing that a right standing before God, one that is blameless and sinless, initially has nothing to do with the righteous - ish works we achieve and everything to do with faith in what someone else accomplished for us, in our place, and then freely credited to our accounts.

Why is he having this discussion. Because men came to Galatia and undermined Paul's authority, his apostleship, and then told the galatian folk that if they wanted to be christians, if they wanted to be acceptable and pleasing to God, they would needs embrace all of judaism, all of Moses law, first, and then present themselves as worthy to Christ.

All of the ceremonies. All of the rituals. All of the sacraments. If you are uncircumcised you will need to be circumcised and embrace everything else in Moses law, and then you can approach Christ, when you're worthy.

According to such a system, salvation then is based on works that I perform in order to achieve a position of quasi-righteousness. I guess somehow Jesus helps, or allows you to be with Him in heaven, based on your self righteous law keeping. Salvation is by works of the law, then, and not by grace. Salvation is by human effort, not divine accomplishment.

And Paul, in his combatting this massive problem, has defended his apostleship with the re-telling of how he was chosen to be an apostle, he has re-established his God given authority in chapters 1 and 2, and now he is rebuilding, re-stating his received from Christ gospel, the only gospel that can save, the gospel that is by faith in the finished work of Christ, on the cross, in our place.

He suffered for our sins. He took our sins and gave us His righteousness. We believe the good news of that transaction. That faith is what saves us. Not jumping through jewish hoops in order to somehow be pleasing to God by becoming jews.

The bottom line is; does salvation come by us doing stuff, or does it come by faith in what the God Man did for us, in our place, at the cross of Calvary? Boil it down even more. Is righteousness by works, or is it by faith in someone else's effectual substitutionary work in our place? Someone who could actually achieve what we could never achieve?

Is salvation by works of the law, or is a righteousness that meets a divine standard. the perfect righteousness of Jesus, imputed to our accounts by faith. Which is it? Because if we get this wrong, hell waits for the already condemned. We are born sinners.

Not less than eternity in heaven or in hell hangs in the balance upon this

question. We speak of life or death questions. This goes far beyond that in importance. This is eternity with or without God. Heaven or hell hangs in the balance. And Paul, inspired by God, answers the question with a brevity of words that could only be achieved by one who is answering with words that are God breathed.

When you study Paul and what he wrote, it becomes obvious, God was breathing out these words. Heaven or hell need not hang in the balance as though these things were too complicated to grasp. *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Isa. 35:8c

On judgement day do NOT argue that God's way of holiness was too hard for you to understand and you need a pass. He'll show you the verse I just quoted and tell you, it was so simple, an idiot could find the way.

Actually that's a problem for a LOT of really smart people. *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."* 1 Cor. 1:18

Pride sends people to hell. The message is too simple. Our pride demands that the gospel be brilliant, like we are. But it isn't. It's so simple that children embrace and believe it while adults reject it because it's too foolish. Too simple. Too easy. Give me something complicated. Give me a bunch of sacraments. Make it hard.

The judaizers came along and made the gospel hard. Go under the knife to join the club. Then follow a few hundred rules. Extra points for misery and torture. God digs it when you sleep on a bed of nails or crawl a mile on your knees. You need to inflict pain on yourself to pay for all that sin you did. What kind of an idiot would believe Paul's message. It's too simple.

So Paul begins, after re-establishing his apostleship, given to him miraculously, by Christ Himself, and his beginning argument is, how did

the Spirit come to you in the beginning. Was it faith, belief of a simple message, Christ died for your sins, paid the debt you owed, and rose from the dead, or works that brought the indwelling Holy Spirit who did miracles in your midst.

Did the Spirit of God indwell you and transform you, and transport you, out of Satan's kingdom and into God's kingdom by works of Moses, or by believing in the accomplishment at the cross and the proof of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

So his beginning argument is upon experience. Everything changed when the Holy Spirit saved you, when you believed. Moses had nothing to do with your experiential living faith. You heard the message about Jesus. You believed. The Spirit came and gave you new life. He quickened you from the death in sin, to life in Christ and with Christ.

You became a child of God. Forgiven. You received the downpayment of the Holy Spirit living inside your heart with the promise of unimaginable riches waiting for you in the next life. That was experiential and none of that required Moses and the law. Real experiential change happened, a vibrant relationship with God began, because you believed in Jesus.

And now Paul is going to go back in history, way before Moses and explain how it was that God chose one man through whom blessing would spread to all tribes and nations and tongues everywhere.

Whatever happened then, had to happen without the law of Moses because it would be almost half a millenium before Moses was born. So how did blessing and righteousness happen before Moses?

I'll give you the oversimplified version. God looked down from heaven one day and said, I need a guy. That single guy is going to father a nation, a race of people. And from those people, a Messiah is going to come. And through that Messiah all the nations and tribes are going to be blessed.

And He looked and said, Abraham will be as good as anybody else. Abraham was from where modern Iraq is now. He was a chaldean and he was a moon worshipper. Joshua 24:2 says he was an idol worshipper.

Nothing He did caused Yahweh to choose Abraham over anyone else. Yahweh chooses who He chooses and He doesn't tell us why. Not our pay grade to know why God does what He does, or chooses who He chooses. All we need to know is His choices are righteous and just because God is God. That's in your pay grade. Believe it.

So Paul chooses God's original chosen person and explores how it is that blessing poured out of heaven on Abraham and his prodigy. And even further, Paul wants to get to the root cause of Abraham being declared as righteous before God.

6 Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness,

If you go back to the book of Genesis and chapter 12 the story of Abraham's belief in God begins. Abraham, actually at this point, he was Abram, lived with his father in Ur of Chaldee and in verse 1 we read this;

*1
And Yahweh said to Abram,
“Go forth from your land,
And from your kin
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;*

*2
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;*

*3
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.*

*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”
4 So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him*

Abram had an inheritance in his father's house. He had land there and possessions he would have inherited. But Yahweh said I've got something better. Leave your old inheritance behind and go to a new place that I will show you, and I'll give you a surpassing inheritance.

Did Abram believe God. There's obvious risk. Leave the known behind and go into the unknown, and I'll not only bless you, but through a great nation from you, I'll bless everyone! Go out with nothing. Leave what you did have behind. I'll give you everything.

Did Abram believe the message of blessing? How do we know? Because he obeyed. He left his father and his kin and his inheritance and his land and departed for the place where God would bless.

But Paul actually quotes from chapter 15. A bit further into the story. Let me read that account to you, because Abram was obedient but no heir had come. Time had gone by. Abram is old. Sarah his wife is old. Way past child bearing years. And God had never blessed Abram and Sarah with any children. How is this going to work, God?

*1 After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying,
“Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.”*

2 And Abram said, “O Lord Yahweh, what will You give me, as I go on being childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Since You have given no seed to me, behold, one born in my house is my heir.” 4 Then behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, “This one will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” 5 And He brought him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your seed be.” 6 Then he

believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness.

I think we have the essence of Paul's gospel in verse one of Genesis 15, thousands of years before Christ came. Yahwah speaks to Abram in a vision. Listen to the words as if they were the saving gospel;

Do not fear, Abram. Our beginning realization of a perfectly Holy God who created all things, owns all things, and who we have offended by our rebellion against His Lordship, should naturally be fear. He is holy, we are not. He is almighty, we are grasshoppers. We have angered the all powerful, how could tiny insignificant man not fear Him who we have rebelled against?

But Yahweh, and I believe this is pre-incarnate Christ, appears to Abram and says, *Do not fear, Abram . . .* how could he not fear?

I am a shield to you; What if I could hide inside someone who would be a shield between tiny sinful me and God who I've offended. What if I had a protector, a shield who would somehow be a go-between the God who I've sinned against, and helpless me? That would be a cause to not be afraid. To be protected with a shield. To literally be inside someone who is a shield for me.

Your reward shall be very great. ” How can this be? The one who offended God receives a massive reward? How is that possible? Only if the One who is my shield has removed my sins. Then instead of wrath I was due, God pours out on me wealth.

Abram got good news that day. Don't be afraid. The sin that causes fear is removed. I am that shield for you. Reward will be yours instead of judgement. That's the gospel folks. The same gospel almost 4000 years ago as we believe today.

Jesus relieves my fears. Jesus is my shield. Jesus paid the debt for my sins. Jesus protects me, because I am in Him. Jesus supplies His righteousness

to my account. Jesus has promised me a very great reward in the next world. Same gospel message. And also the same root cause that makes it happen.

Gen. 15:6 Then he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness.

The shield made Abram transactionally righteous. Those words are legal terms used in accounting. Abram owed an unpayable debt of sin, but the shield who is Yahweh, accounted righteousness to Abrams account, because he believed. No works of Moses involved. Faith in Yahweh as his shield, accounted to Abram, righteousness.

Jesus speaks of this very day, to the jews who claim Abraham as their father, but who hate the shield who saved Abraham.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. Jn. 8:56-59

That scripture is the basis of why I believe Yahweh, when he appears to men, in the old testament, is pre-incarnate Christ. We call that a Christophany.

Like Abraham, I also have a shield who removes sin and fear and gives me a great reward. And like Abraham, it was belief in that good news that made all the difference. I'm not a christian because of works of the law that I keep and do. I'm a christian because the Shield chose to shower me with blessings He purchased for me, and I simply believed in Him.

This is where Paul goes to argue for a faith based realization of promises we could never purchase for ourselves. His argument is against those who have come and said, faith is based in works of Moses that we do.

Paul says, I will stand with Abraham, the believer. Let's continue to look at his argument, logical by historic association.

6 Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, 7 so know that those who are of faith, those are sons of Abraham.

The jews like to claim that they are sons of Abraham. The sons of Israel, the tribes of Jacob are in the lineage of Abraham. The men who picked up stones to kill Jesus are sons of Abraham.

These men who came from Judea with this Satanic heretical message of righteousness by works, are sons of the men who picked up stones to stone Jesus.

They want to believe that the combination of blood lineage to Israel and the keeping of God's law given through Moses makes them righteous enough to stand before a Holy God. Righteous by lineage and works of the law. Son's of Abraham.

But Paul is making a biblical argument that Abraham became a son, first of all by God's choice and second of all by his belief in what God told him.

Therefore to be a son of Abraham is to be someone who believes the gospel, the good news of salvation that God provides for us.

Gal. 3:6 Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, 7 so know that those who are of faith, those are sons of Abraham.

Abraham didn't receive the blessing by doing stuff. Abraham received the blessing because He believed God would be his shield. He believed God would supply the promises. Paul describes Abrahams faith in Romans chapter 4;

20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 Therefore it was also counted to him as righteousness.

Faith that God would supply the promises was what brought righteousness to Abram's account. Faith, not works.

5 He saved us, not by works which we did in righteousness, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, Titus 3:5,6

Christ is the promised Son of God who came through the lineage of Abraham. Therefore true sons of Abraham are those of us who are hidden in Christ. The gentile christians are adopted sons of Abraham because we are in Christ. Faith in the finished work of Christ made me a son of Abraham by believing the same gospel of blessing that he did.

Doing the works of Moses never enters the equation, then or now.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you."

The jews had become myopic. Short sighted. Salvation is by family. Abraham, then 12 tribes, then Moses, chosen nation, God's chosen people. And in their short sightedness the only way in, to get to God, for outsiders, was to convert to judaism.

From God's perspective, the jews were a vehicle of two realities to get to the larger promise. The jews received God's revelation. Through Moses and the prophets, God spoke. God revealed Himself, through the jews.

The second purpose for the Jews was it was through their lineage, that the Son of David, the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah would come. But they forgot the end game.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you."

God's purpose went way beyond His vehicle for revelation and for a Son to be born into, the end game that God told Abraham way back in the original covenant in Genesis 12 was; *"All the nations will be blessed in you."* All the families of the earth will be blessed IN Abraham by the Holy One who would come through his lineage. Jesus.

There is nothing of the law of Moses in that promise of blessing. The law was given to show us how rich the blessing is, because the law is a mirror that shows us how broken and sinful we actually are. The law magnifies the blessing, because when I look into the law, I discover I'm a wretched hopeless bankrupt.

The Judaizers had come and had convinced the foolish bewitched Galatians to actually go backwards back into a false religion. Works righteousness through keeping Moses law was never acceptable to God.

Do you understand that most of the chosen people of Israel are in hell. Jesus made that pretty clear. He compares two people in the temple. One who is at the pinnacle of the false religion of Judaism and the other who was shunned and excluded from the religion of Israel. Luke 18

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and was praying these things to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his

chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Jesus said your righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Paul came bringing the gospel of a righteousness available for free to all who would have faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

The judaizers came after Paul and said, no, Paul's wrong, you have to be like the scribes and the pharisees in order to be acceptable to God. Right back into an error of the false religion of Israel that Jesus rejected as not righteous enough. It was a damnable heresy.

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the scriptures, alone, for the glory of God alone. Works has no part in our salvation. We believe Jesus died a substitutionary death, in our place, took our full punishment of death for our sins, and gave us His righteousness, credited to our accounts. Faith in that finished work is what brings the blessings of salvation and adoption as sons.

Where is works then. Because I can't just go do as my old self pleases. How does works fit after salvation by faith. There is a lot of confusion about this.

Salvation is not by works, but true salvation cannot help but produce good works. The reformers in the 1500's would agree. They said, salvation is by faith, alone. But saving faith is never alone.

Read through the faith chapter of Hebrews 11. Saving faith always is accompanied by evidence. Those people are in that chapter because God

accomplished mighty works through them, by their faith, in Him. It isn't a chapter of people who claimed they had faith, and then did nothing.

People will go to James chapter 2 and say, Paul and James disagree on faith and works. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are fighting two different errors on two different fronts.

Paul is fighting the error of Salvation by works. James is fighting the error of claiming salvation by faith alone, but then that so called faith doesn't produce anything. You claim to believe, but there's no evidence. Real faith that brings the indwelling Christ cannot help but produce fruit.

James could have written the 11th chapter of Hebrews. We don't know. He's actually the logical choice. Head of the Jerusalem church. Paul is fighting on one front saying the miracle of salvation is by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus death and resurrection.

James and the writer of Hebrews are saying, if that happened. If this faith you claim to have is the real thing. We should be able to add ourselves to that list in Hebrews 11. By faith so and so did such and such. Real faith accomplishes things only God can accomplish, through those who possess it.

By faith, Jackie prepares a lesson for a group of children week in and week out to help them understand God's blessings. By faith Jeff prepares some songs each week and makes our broken down music thing work week in and week out. By faith Jeff and Donna were a continual unseen comfort to Carl and Karen in their distress.

By faith Richard works tirelessly inviting people to come and join us in worship here. By faith Kirk and Carmen encourage people to worship God. By faith Gary has left the comforts of his home in Oregon behind and gone into the complete unknown to try to help people in the Philipines have a better life enjoying the riches Christ brings to the poor.

We come into this by faith plus nothing. But if our faith is real, God will use us to produce fruit for His glory. Real faith removes us from Satan's authority to reign and places us in God's kingdom, God's authority to reign. If you have that faith and that has happened to you, there will be evidence. We are lights in darkness. We are salt that brings God's flavor to Satan's world.

Paul says we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, according to the scriptures alone, for the glory of God, alone. And James says, if that's your claim, I'll love to write your story down in the continuing saga of Hebrews 11. The chapter of what God is accomplishing through people who have real faith has never stopped being written. By faith God first saves us, and then by faith He produces fruit through us. All for His glory.