

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

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Thursday May 21, 2026

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 3:11 (NASB95) Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, **“THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”**

A Defense of Justification by Faith

Galatians 3:6 - 9 (NLT)

⁶ In the same way, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” ⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. ⁸ What’s more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

POINT 1 - POSITIVE PROOF FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed in you.” So, then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (3:6–9) NASB

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Paul's positive proof that the Old Testament teaches salvation by faith rather than works revolves around Abraham, father of the Hebrew people and supreme patriarch of Judaism.

The Judaizers doubtlessly used Abraham as certain proof that circumcision was necessary to please God and become acceptable to Him. After first calling Abraham to leave his homeland of Ur of Chaldea, the Lord promised, "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; 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 shall be blessed" (**Gen. 12:2–3**). Abraham and his descendants were later commanded to be circumcised as a sign of God's covenant and a constant illustration of the need for spiritual cleansing from sin: "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised" (**Gen. 17:10**). (The cutting away of the foreskin on the male reproductive organ signified the need to cut away sin from the heart—sin that was inherent, passed from one generation to the next; cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Col. 2:11.)

Putting those two accounts together, the Judaizers argued, "Isn't it obvious that if the rest of the world, that is, Gentiles, are to share in the promised blessings to Abraham, they must first take on the sign that marks God's people, the Jews? If all the nations of the earth will be blessed in Abraham, they will have to become like Abraham and be circumcised."

"But that doesn't follow," Paul replied in effect. Quoting **Genesis 15:6**, he asked, "Don't you know that **even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?** Had they conveniently ignored the fact that Scripture

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precisely ascribed righteousness to Abraham by faith and that God commanded Abraham to be circumcised many years *after* He had **reckoned** Abraham to be righteous because he **believed God?**”

When some ten years passed after God’s first promise and his wife, Sarah, was still childless, Abraham prayed, “O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezar of Damascus?” The Lord then took Abraham “outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (**Gen. 15:2, 5–6**). It was at least fourteen years after that occasion (see Gen. 16:16; 17:1) before the command for his circumcision was given.

The Judaizers, like most other Jews of that day, had completely reversed the relationship of circumcision and salvation. Circumcision was only a mark, not the means, of salvation. God established circumcision as a physical sign to identify His people and to isolate them from the idolatrous, pagan world around them during the time of the Old Covenant. Circumcision is an external, physical act that has no effect on the spiritual work of justification. God gave the sign of circumcision to Abraham long *after* He had already declared him to be righteous because of his faith.

It has always been true that “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (**Rom. 2:28–29**). Physical circumcision was a matter of earthly, ceremonial identity with God’s people, whereas salvation is a matter of spiritual identity with

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Him; and if the earthly symbol had no genuine spiritual counterpart it was worthless. Even under the Old Covenant, circumcision itself carried no spiritual power.

It should be noted also that Abraham is not only the pattern for justification by faith but for obedient living by that faith.

By faith Abraham followed God to an unknown land and by faith he was willing to give back to God the son who alone could be the means of fulfilling the divine promise. Abraham, as every true believer before and after him, understood faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (**Heb. 11:1**). By faith Abraham even looked forward to Christ. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (**John 8:56**).

To reemphasize the absolute importance of what he was saying, Paul added, **Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.** He was making the same point to the believing Jews in Galatia that Jesus made to the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem: Only genuine believers, **those who are of faith**, have any claim to a spiritual relationship to **Abraham**, or to God. Jews with no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are not true **sons of Abraham**, whereas Gentiles who believe in Him are.

Lest Christians think that, because His chosen people have rejected Him, the Lord will reject them, Paul declares unequivocally, “I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” Then he repeats the declaration, “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew” (**Rom. 11:1–2**). God still has marvelous future plans for the Jews as a people. But at no time of history—

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before or after His special calling of the Jews—has *any* person been brought into saving relationship to God by any other means than faith.

Discussion Questions

1. Who is Abraham in Galatians 3:6 ?
2. How are people of faith children of Abraham?
3. How does faith relate to righteousness?
4. What stands out to you in this section?

Personifying God’s Word, the apostle goes on to say, **the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham**—which is an exposition of Genesis 12:3: **“All the nations shall be blessed in you.”** **Gospel** means “good news,” and God’s good news to mankind has always been salvation by faith alone, prompted by the

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power of His grace. Salvation by works would not be good but bad news. **All the nations**, Jews and **Gentiles** alike, are justified and **blessed** for the same reason **Abraham** was justified and blessed: their **faith**. **So, then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer**. To be **blessed** means to be the recipient of all that divine love, grace, and mercy bestows on those who are in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3; 2:6–7).

At the Jerusalem Council, James said, “Brethren, listen to me. Simeon [Peter] has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name’ ” (Acts 15:13–17; cf. Amos 9:11–12).

When Gentiles are saved, they are saved as Gentiles, just as Jews are saved as Jews. But no one from either group is saved or not saved due to racial or ethnic identity. Those who are saved are saved because of their faith, and those who are lost are lost because of their unbelief. A Gentile has absolutely no advantage in becoming a Jew before he becomes a Christian. In fact, by expecting salvation through the rite of circumcision, a person, whether Jew or Gentile, nullifies the grace of God and declares, in effect, that “Christ died needlessly” (**Gal. 2:21**).

Discussion Questions

1. How does faith “justify believers according to Paul?

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2. What is the Abrahamic blessing in Galatians 3:8?

3. What stood out to you in this lesson or what was most meaningful to you?

CLOSING PRAYER