

Title: Paul's Theological Defense: The Fulfilling of a Promise to Save Gentiles
Text: Galatians 3:6-14

Theme: Gentiles can be right with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Such truth is proven by Abraham's justification and the Law's intent. Faith in Christ connects the believer to Abraham and frees him from the Law.

Introduction: Paul's illustrations prove the point made in verses 1-5. First, Abraham was justified by faith and those who believe participate in the blessing made to Abraham. Second, the Law brought nothing but a curse to the unable.

Remember the context. The Judaizers are arguing that the Gentile believers must **embrace the Law to be justified and to maintain their justification**. Paul seeks to show how Abraham was justified apart from the Law and how the Law is a curse not a blessing to the Law breaker. He goes on to show how Christ paid the Law's debt and thus frees all who believe in Him from its weight.

The real "slap" came when he noted how Gentile believers are the true children of Abraham and benefactors of the promise made to him. This must have made them furious. Six times Paul quotes from the Scripture to prove his point that justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Connecting it with the preceding paragraph we have this thought. Just as your submission to (v.1), salvation from (v.2), sanctification in (v.3), suffering for (v.4) and service through (v.5) are all acts of faith and grace, so also was this true of Abraham.

Law and faith are incompatible. This is shown by the experience of the Galatians (3:1-5), the example of Abraham (3:6-9) and the nature of the Law (3:10-14).

"The passage is introduced here by the apostle to show that the most eminent of the patriarchs was not saved by the deeds of the law. He was saved by faith, and this fact showed that it was possible to be saved in that way, and that it was the design of God to save men in this manner. Abraham believed God, and was justified, *before* the Law of Moses was given. It could not, therefore, be pretended that the law was necessary to justification; for if it had been, Abraham could not have been saved. But if not necessary in his case, it was in no other; and this instance demonstrated that the false teachers among the Galatians were wrong even according to the Old Testament." (Albert Barnes *Notes on the New Testament*)

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/Application

Its Eternal Value:

All who come in faith to Christ are to live by faith in Christ. There is no longer any need to strive for what is already true.

The Problem:

Our natural tendency is to work for what is already ours. Our work has two negative effects. First, it creates a sense of false worth. Second, it diminishes what Jesus has done and does. Both are wrong.

The Storyline:

This passage clearly shows the continuity in the redemptive purpose of God by introducing the relationship of Abraham and the Law to the work of Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. Why is Abraham brought into Paul's argument?
2. Who was Abraham in relation to the nation of Israel?
3. How was righteousness attributed to Abraham?
4. What did Abraham have to "do" in order to become righteous?
5. Who are the true sons of Abraham?
6. How are the Gentiles justified?
7. Were the Gentiles a part of God's redemptive purpose from the start?
8. What gospel did Abraham have preached to him?
9. How do Gentiles become beneficiaries of Abraham's blessing?
10. What does the works of the Law produce?
11. If I am under the Law am I obligated to obey all the Law?
12. What if I break only one Law, am I still under its curse?
13. What is the curse of the Law?
14. What conclusion is made in verse 11?
15. Why is this true based on Paul's argument? What does he assume about everyone concerning the Law?
16. Is the works of the Law contrary to faith?
17. If I attempt to keep one Law, am I obligated to keep all the Law?
18. What has Christ done?
19. How did Christ become a curse for us?
20. Why did Christ become the curse?
21. What is the blessing of Abraham?
22. How is the promise of the Spirit received?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know how anyone can become a descendent and heir of Abraham's blessing.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Christ above the Law.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His finished work.

Outline:

- I. Abraham proves justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (vv. 6-9).
 - A. Abraham was saved by faith (3:6-7).

Our passage begins with “Even so.” “The word indicates that Paul is drawing a parallel between Abraham’s justification and present-day justification.” (Rogers and Rogers, 426).

1. The illustration presented (3:6)

There are two statements in verse six that need noting.

- a. “Abraham believed God.”

The statement originates in Genesis 15:6.

Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15 confirms what was stated earlier in Genesis 12:1-3. Here Abraham’s faith in God is noted and the action of God to Abraham. It is then used in three New Testament books (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Jam. 2:23).

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

James uses Genesis 15:6 to prove works as the consequence or natural outworking of a grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone justification.

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

In Romans 4:1-5, Paul argues that justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and uses Abraham as an example of this truth.

There are three truths about believing/faitth that need to be noted. **First**, faith never operates in a vacuum. You do not have faith in faith or faith in nothing. This leads us to our second thought. **Second**, faith must always have an object. And **finally**, the object of faith must be valid. It isn’t that Abraham believed or that he believed in something. Abraham believed God and it is this that resulted in his justification.

b. “And it was accounted to him as righteousness.”

I now have in my account the righteousness of Christ to draw on. The legalist refuses to believe this. Yet my account is so full nothing more can be added and no charge against me is so great as to diminish it in any way.

It was not his faith that was considered his righteousness. Because Abraham believed God, God put into his account His righteousness. Abraham’s faith did not justify him, God justified Him. His faith was the channel through which the righteousness of God was transferred to his account. It was Abraham’s faith that asked God to transfer all of His righteousness into Abraham’s account. It was God’s righteousness that justifies the sinner. It is the sinner’s faith that asks God for His righteousness.

"Accounted" = to place to one's account, to reckon, imputed (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:17-22). This is one of those power words. This word deals with reality. If I “reckon” my bank book has \$25 in it, it has \$25 in it. The justification of the sinner is real. God has declared him righteous. “This means that **the record is always clean before God**, and therefore **the believer can never be brought into judgment for his sins.**” ([emphasis added] Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 68).

In justification “God does not treat the justified *as if* he were righteous before him when actually he is not. To the contrary, the justified sinner is *in fact* righteous in God’s sight because of the ‘in Christ’ relationship in which he stands (2 Cor. 5:21), in which relationship the righteousness of Christ is actually imputed to him.” (Robert L. Reymond, *New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 753)

It is an aorist passive indicative. Our justification is on the spot and it is God who justifies us, we cannot justify ourselves.

2. The illustration explained (3:7).

If by faith I become a Jew, then would I not be obligated to keep the law? The false brethren would seek to convince you that you must keep the “Law” if you would be right with God and thus a child of Abraham. Paul's emphasis is that by faith one becomes a true child of Abraham. Notice his conclusion in Galatians 3:26-29.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And **if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

It is not through natural descent that one is a child of the promise, but through faith.

Jesus Christ is the promised seed of Abraham and because we are in Christ we are, like Christ, Abraham's descendants. Notice the language of the New Testament/Agreement.

Galatians 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Romans 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. 13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

B. This salvation is equally by faith for the Gentiles (3:8, 9)

Genesis 12:3 "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.**"

The passages in the Scripture showing Gentile inclusion in God's redemptive purpose are too numerous to cite. It has always been God's intent to include the Gentiles in His redemptive purposes.

Ps 22:27 **All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,** And all the families of the nations will worship before You.

Ps 67:2 That **Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.**

Ps 67:4 **Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;** For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.

Ps 72:11 And let all kings bow down before him, **All nations serve him.**

Ps 72:17 May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines; And let men bless themselves by him; **Let all nations call him blessed.**

Ps 86:9 **All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You,** O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.

Ps 117:1 **Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!**

Before the gospel was ever brought into existence God had already made provision for the redemption of the Gentile world. The fact that the Gentile Galatians are saved is a testimony to (1) the faithfulness of God and (2) the certainty of His Word. We can rest confidently in the promises of God seeing they are secured in the character of God.

"Preached Before" = Describes **Gen. 3:15**. "To announce or promise glad tidings or good news beforehand." "The word indicates that the faith element in God's method of

justification is timeless.” (*Rogers & Rogers, 426*). The gospel preached to Abraham was to be believed for the justification of the ungodly. This Abraham did. Again, what he believed and what we believe are on the same line but at different points on the line. What is this gospel that Abraham heard? How is there continuity in the gospel preached to Abraham, that of Jesus, Peter, Paul and the Church? Let us note four ideas.

- First, the **basis** of salvation in every age is the death of Jesus Christ. God forgives everyone because of what His Son did before the foundation of the world (Rom. 13:8) and will do in time (John 19:31).
- Second, the **requirement** for salvation in every age is faith.
- Third, the **object** of faith in every age is God. Both the requirement and the object are present in the example of Abraham.
- Finally, the **content** of faith is always Christo-centric. What one believes about God’s provisional lamb is always expanding, but what they believed was Christ-centered. This is the “line of blood” that is traceable throughout the Scripture.

It is for this reason we can say salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone regardless as to the age in which one lives.

“The logic here is evident: if God promised to save the Gentiles by faith, then the Judaizers are wrong in wanting to take the Gentile believers back into law.” (*Wiersbe, Galatians, 69*),

Notice Paul’s application in verse nine. Only those who believe are benefactors of the promise made to Abraham. Paul is implying that the Gentile Galatians rather than the “Jewish” Galatians are the true heirs of Abraham's blessings. Paul begins the next paragraph with **gar**. Here it functions as a **reason** as to why what was just said is true.

- II. The Law proves justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (3:10-14).
 - A. Law curses all non-conformity (3:10)

Deut. 7:26 “Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’”

Deut. 29:20 “The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.”

Jere. 11:3 and say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “**Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant**”

Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; 15 **for the Law brings about wrath**, but where there is no law, there also is no violation (Rom. 4:11-13 is cited above).

James 2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

The good news is that "The curse becomes effective only when the Law is violated." The bad news is "It's always violated!" Remember Paul's point in 2:19? Think of Paul's argument in Romans 7:9-13? The Law works death in me by showing me my inability to obey what it asks of me. "The Present tense indicates the need for unbroken and continual observance of the whole law." (*Rogers & Rogers, 426*).

The 613 Laws outline for us in the Mosaic code had three aspects (ceremonial/religious, civil/social, and moral/ethical). To the Jew the Law was an indivisible whole. We have a tendency of thinking of the 10 commandments or of the moral law, but to the Jew it was all moral, ceremonial and civil. You could not keep one without keeping the other two. The Law is an inseparable unit. The Law reached into every area of Jewish life. You had to keep the Law. No one could keep the Law perfectly, thus people were perpetually bringing the sacrifice.

No one (except our Lord) ever kept the Law perfectly, thus all born of man was/is cursed. The standard established by the Law revealed the one who was perfect in their flesh. An intent of the Law was to show the imperfection of man and thus his need for a deliverer from that which cursed.

B. The Law is not of faith (3:11, 12)

The intent of the Law was not to justify the ungodly. Law keeping was not by means of faith, but works. Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4. He also uses this idea in Romans 1:17 and the author of Hebrews cites it in Hebrews 10:38. The justified person is not living by works/Law, but by faith/grace.

The word "evident (**dalos**) is interesting. It has the idea of "being obvious, or plainly seen." It is used of Peter's speech betraying him before his accusers (Matt. 26:73) and it is used by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The Law's intent was never to justify the sinner, so why are some making an appeal back to the Law for their justification?

Verse 12 is conclusive: “The Law is not of faith.” There appears to be a real dichotomy between the doing or practicing of Law for justification and living by faith. **It is not the Law that is in error, but the false brethren who misrepresent the Law.**

“The Judaizers wanted to seduce the Galatians into a religion of legal works, while Paul wanted them to enjoy a relationship of love and life by faith in Christ. The Law cannot give life, and the law cannot give liberty. Why, then, go back into the Law?” (Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 71).

This is an important point to keep in mind when thinking about the Law and its demands of perfection and non-compliant justice.

The Law, like God, is unyielding in the execution of justice against the Law-breaker. The Law is not in contrast to God, but a picture of God. It is not that the Law is ungracious or cruel or unjust. The Law extends grace to the Law breaker by providing restoration through the blood of an innocent victim. Yet what the Law could not do permanently God did. God’s restoration of sinners is not based on the solitary power of Him willing. He forgives sinners by becoming what He created and then acting in the role of both offerer and offering. He becomes the means by which He Himself is satisfied. It is this provision that is graciously offered to the sinner. The sinner simply must receive the gift by faith, by believing God as the giver and the gift.

The Law demands work, it demands obedience, whereas what Jesus does in the cross does not. The obedience that flows from justification, and is clear in sanctification, is not a work of the flesh, but a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The obedience of the Christian is not a requirement or obligation. It does not affect the believers standing before God or His attitude or actions toward them. The obedience of faith is a fruit. Just as a living person breathes so also a Christian bears fruit. In the absence of breath life is lacking and in the absence of obedience justification is not present. This is the argument of James in James 2:14-26. The Christian life is not a life of works, but a life of faith. That is the contrast established in Galatians 3:12.

This is the argument of Paul in Romans 4:4-8.

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN

WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

Friend, the cross changes everything. God does everything. Now it is for us to rest in His finished work. This tension between works and faith is also used by Paul in Romans 9:30-32.

Romans 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

Paul also notes this sharp contrast in Romans 11:5, 6.

5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

We will continue to stumble into bondage in the Christian life if we do not note the necessary distinction between work and faith.

- C. This salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (3:13-14).

[READ] 2 Corinthians 5:15-21

15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (**Think Galatians 2:20**). 16 Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now **all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself** through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

How can we miss the great weight of what Paul says here? You and I are free in Christ from sin's demands and debt.

"The absence of a connecting particle emphasizes the greatness of this glad contrast." (Williams, *Galatians*, 64).

“Abrupt exclamation, as he breaks away impatiently from those who would involve us again in the curse of the law, by seeking justification in it, to ‘Christ,’ who ‘has redeemed us from its curse.’” (*Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown*)

The Law created a curse debt through my inability to meet its demands. Christ met the demand and paid off the debt in full. The temporal provision of the Law is swallowed up by the permanent sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ.

“God's providence ordered it so that to fulfil the prophecy of the curse and other prophecies, Jesus should be crucified, and so hang on the tree, though that death was not a Jewish mode of execution. The Jews accordingly, in contempt, call Him Tolvi, ‘the hanged one,’ and Christians, ‘worshippers of the hanged one;’ and make it their great objection that He died the accursed death [TRYPHO, in Justin Martyr, p. 249] (1Pe 2:24). [Jesus Christ] hung between heaven and earth as though unworthy of either!” (*Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown*)

His payment was so complete and eternal that I can never be in a position of obligation again as it relates to the Law. His payment is so inclusive that I can now enjoy deliverance from the Law's curse. This includes me receiving the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The Law was incapable of bringing justification, it brought condemnation (3:10-12). Only Christ brings a complete and eternal redemption.

The curse of the Law brought all into massive debt, but Christ met the demands of the Law (keeping it perfectly). He became our sacrifice (redemption) and substitute (curse for us - Deut. 21:23).

[READ] Hebrews 9 and 10

"The Promise" = v.14 becomes the purpose statement of v. 13. Jesus Christ is the provision to the promise. He does for us what we could never do for ourselves. Every thing we have and are is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He is both the giver and the gift. May this truth consume us.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. God will justify anyone who believes.
2. Everything we need to do before God is through the avenue of faith. It is not by works, but by faith.
3. To add works to what we are in Christ is to diminish the work of Christ.
4. The intent of verses 6-14 is to prove Paul's point in 3:1-5. From start to finish and everything in-between it is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.