

Title: **Father Abraham (Part 2)**

Passage: **Galatians 3:6b-7**

Theme: **Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith Alone: Abraham**

Number: **1115Ga3.6b-7(31)**

Date: **November 15, 2015**

{ {Read Passage} }

[i] Good to be back in Galatians (long time coming – Nov. 1)

On that date:

Father Abraham had many sons

Had many sons had Father Abraham

I am one of them

And so are you

So let's just praise the Lord

If that song were around in 1st c. Galatia:

Father Abraham had many sons,

And many sons had Father Abraham;

And I am one of them, but you are not,

Because you don't keep the Law.

[ii] This would have been the song as sung by “The Judaizers”

Who were t/Js? Not a PrB from t/80s.

A 1st c. heretical group consisting of Jews who claimed to believe in J. but also demanded adherence to t/Law of M. – Circumcision –

They wrongly believed that to truly be a son of A. (to be right B4 G.) you had to keep t/Law.

*Father Abraham had many sons,
And many sons had Father Abraham;
And I am one of them, but you are not,
Because you don't keep the Law.*

[iii] Justification by Faith and Union with Christ

2:16 . . . [no one is] justified by the works of the Law but [solely] through faith in Christ Jesus . . . since by the works of the Law [no one will] . . . be justified.

2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

From t/intro. of JbyF in ch. 2, Paul turns to a defense of JbyF – a defense that runs all t/way into ch. 4.

I. Paul's First Defense of Justification by Faith Alone: Don't Forget the Change (3:1-5)

Argument from personal experience . . .

Experience?!

Subjective reality based on objective truth.

Central v. →

3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Another way of asking: “*Did your entrance into new life in X come by way of doing something or believing in Someone.*” (? restated in v. 5)

Legacy of false religion – there is something I have to do or accomplish iotb reconciled w/G.

Take t/myriads of religions out there (Islam; Judaism; Hinduism) – as well as t/many counterfeit perversions of Xnty that demand allegiance to their works-oriented system – they all amt. to t/false religion of human achievement that cannot possibly bridge t/gulf between sinful man & holy G.

Tru Xnty isn't a religion of human achievement; it's a movement of Divine accomplishment.

I. Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith Alone: The Faith of Abraham (3:6-9)

A. is mentioned by name 1x in each of these 4 verses (6-9).

Also – 14,16,18, 4:22 – (8x total).

Abraham 8x – more than any other in Gal.

Why is A. so signific.?

Chief OT Patriarch: A., Is., Jac., Jos. → 12 tribes of Israel.
Physical father of t/Jews & t/spiritual father of all believers.

Why A.? Paul is using t/Judaizer's own playbook.

They likely appealed to A. / circumcision (Gen 17:9–14) to support their argument that circumcision (t/Law) was non-neg.

But more to t/story than that incl. fact that A. lived long b4 t/giving of t/Law thru M.

I. Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith Alone: The Faith of Abraham (3:6-9)

Argument from A. = Argument from Script. Could change o/l [^]

TAP's theological exposition of key OT passages addressing A., faith, Law, salvation, promise. We see t/Law's curse contrasted w/t/blessing that comes by faith.

If we incl. t/next section (vv. 10-14) Paul references 5 OT texts (order of appearance): Gen. 15:6; Dt. 27:26; Hab. 2:4; Lev. 18:5; Dt. 21:23.

This is our 2d wk. in this section, vv. 6-9 →

Justification by Faith Alone is as old as Father Abraham

From time that our 1st parents sinned & brot all of creation down w/them, G's plan for t/redemption of fallen humanity has centered on faith in Him. Coming of JC into t/world, his death on t/cross, was not a new way of salv. from sin but t/consummation & basis for 1 single way that is as old as A. himself: Trust in God's promise.

Justification by Faith Alone is as old as Father Abraham

Last time we camped on t/1st ½ of v. 6 answering t/? →

A. Who Was Abraham? (6a)

We spent some time in Gen. 11-15 looking at t/history & life of this 1st great Patriarch of t/Jewish people.

God sov. called him out of paganism in a land known as Ur of t/Chald.

2100-2200 BC.

God promises him a son (Isaac) thru an aged/barren wife, Sarah.

He was to be t/father of many nations & thru him t/ultimate blessing of Messiah, JC.

Matthew 1:1 THE book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

We move from t/person of A. to t/faith of A. (2d point) →

B. What Do Faith and Righteousness Have in Common? (6b)

1. We see both of those topics in v. 6:

Just as Abraham BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

TAP quotes his 1st OT passage, Gen. 15:6 (LXX).

Context {summarize}:

4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”5 And He took him 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.”6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Passage Paul also cites in Ro 4. He asks t/? in v. 1 →

1 **WHAT** then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “**AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”

2. Let's break this quote down into its two parts

... **Abraham BELIEVED GOD** ...

a. **He believed God**

Does not say ‘A. believed in G.’ but ‘he believed G.’

Diff. Lot's of ppl. believe in “God” as some abstract deity of their own making. While believing in God is essential, act. believing Him takes it to another level.

“I believe in G. but I don't believe in t/Bible” or “I believe in G. but I don't believe that t/Bible is inspired.”

To believe G. = to bel. in all that He says; it's to trust Him & to trust His very Words recorded for us in t/Old and New Testa.

Do you believe Him? // completely trust Him? // take Him at his Wrds?
Do you trust Him in t/midst of seemingly impossible circumstances?

A. promised land in Gen. 12:1 (he had none).

A. promised an heir, a son (he had none) – he was nearly 100 yrs old!

... Abraham BELIEVED GOD ...

(1) Faith is only as good as its object

Interview t/other day of a celebrity who was asked, “Faith is very important to you, isn't it?” My ears perked up. She responded, “Oh yes, I definitely believe in a “higher power.””

Common today.

Far cry from what we see here where t/Heb. text literally has

... he believed YHWH / in YHWH ...

Personal, covenantal name of t/One and Only God over all things.

Cf. John 8:24 . . .

b. Second part of the verse:

... AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Consequence of Abraham's faith: righteousness was credited to him.

(1) Word “Credited” ($\lambda\omega\gamma\iota\zeta\omega\mu\alpha\iota$) can be translated “charged” or “imputed”

It's to credit or charge something to someone else.

(2) Doctrine of Imputation

Our sin was imputed to JC - it was credited to him (he didn't deserve it // didn't sin or become a sinner).

For believers, the elect, X's righteousness is credited to us (we don't deserve it, we don't become inherently sinless by it).

Imputation is portrayed so wonderfully in Paul's letter to Philemon.
{explain}

Also Phil. 3:9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

So, when a sinner comes to saving faith in JC, X's righteousness is imputed to that 1 who is thereby justified (declared righteous).

Goes back to our Union w/X (2:20).

Such a reading fits with Paul's explanation of the same text in Rom 4:2–5. Abraham was counted as righteous before God even though he was ungodly. Nor does Paul suggest that Abraham's faith was his righteousness, as if faith could be considered to be a kind of work that makes one righteous before God. Rather, faith is counted as righteousness because it unites believers to Christ, who is their righteousness. Such a conclusion fits with one of Paul's major themes in Galatians, i.e., that the Galatians' righteousness derives from the cross of Christ. [Schreiner, 192]

Word λογίζομαι is used numerous times in Rom. 4.

Romans 4:8 (Psa. 32:2) “BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.” (impute)

9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, “FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” 10 How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

Paul's argument here....

(3) Faith is not righteousness (not a “work”)

Faith unites us to righteousness because faith unites t/believing sinner to JC who is their righteousness. Cf. Union with X.

3. This was radical among the Jews of Paul's day

NPP – Jews were grace oriented. Evidence to t/contrary.

As it related to Abraham, t/Jewish consensus of t/day was that God rewarded him, not because of his faith, but because his faithfulness.

Big difference.

Jewish trad. emphasized A's obed. ience than his faith.

Example, 1 Macc 2:52 says, “Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?”

Sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 is merged w/Gen 15:6. Result: A's obed./faithfulness emphasized over his faith.

Sirach / Ecclesiasticus (OT Apocrypha) 44:19–21:

Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations,
and no one has been found like him in glory.
He kept the law of the Most High,
and entered into a covenant with him;
he certified the covenant in his flesh,
and when he was tested he proved faithful.

Some taught that A. kept t/Law of Moses before it was even given!

Paul counters that false, works-oriented understanding which emphasized what Abraham did and replaces it w/the true Gospel of grace centered on faith in God.

... Abraham BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Justification by faith alone and imputation / righteousness of JC.

That is our only hope.

Without the righteousness of Christ you and I are finished. Without imputation there is no justification, and without justification by faith alone there is no gospel. [R.C. Sproul, Romans, 509]

Example . . .

The story is told of William Herschel who as a young boy loved military music. He grew up in Germany & joined t/military band.

When his nation went to war, he was one of those leading the military band. He was totally unprepared for the horrors of war, and the result was that before long he deserted his military unit and fled the battle scene during an intense period of fighting.

He fled to England, and began to pursue further training in both music and science. Thinking he was in the clear, he grew and prospered in his new country. In fact he made various scientific discoveries that made him famous, and he gained great renown for his musical abilities. However, after Herschel came to the British Isles, another German came to live there—George who in fact became the King of England.

King George knew of Herschel's past desertion of the army and summoned the great musician and scientist to appear before the royal court. Herschel went with fear and trembling (penalty for desertion was death). When he arrived in the palace he was told to wait a considerable time in an ante-chamber to the throne room. Then finally, one of the King's servants came to Herschel and handed him a document and told him to read it. He opened it with fear, only to discover that it read '*I George pardon you for your past offenses against our native land*'. George had pronounced the verdict of no condemnation on William Herschel.

Romans 8:1 . . .

This is what Paul is saying here. This is what G.'s declaration of pardon does for all of us who believe.

Ben Witherington (to whom I am indebted for this illustration): This story perfectly illustrates Paul's concept of justification—it is a matter of God pronouncing a verdict of no condemnation on the sinner, or, put positively, it is a matter of declaring that the person in question was justified, in right relationship to the Law and the Law giver, even though he was in fact far from perfect. With the legal judgment of no condemnation . . . comes the implication that sins have been forgiven, and so one need no longer be estranged from God. Yet estrangement is not overcome merely by a pronouncement from above. One must respond in faith to such a pronouncement. One must accept forgiveness. Forgiveness offered is not the same as forgiveness received.

[Adapted from Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 195]

C. Will the Real Children of Abraham Please Stand? (7)

So then, understand that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham.

1. Paul is answering the question: “who are those who can rightly claim to be children of Abraham?”

This may have been how the Judaizers were framing the issue (“we are the true sons of Abraham”).

Much like the Jews of Jesus' day.

They prided themselves in t/Law / circumcision. Their deeds.

Legacy of human religion.

John MacArthur:

Since the Fall, proud mankind has been naturally inclined to trust in himself, including his ability to please God by his own character and efforts. The Jews of Jesus' day put great stock in circumcision and physical descent from Abraham. When Jesus told a group of them, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," they replied, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone" (John 8:31–33). Their answer was obviously absurd from a historical standpoint. The Jewish people had been in severe bondage many times throughout their history and were at that time under the iron rule of Rome. Even more foolish, however, was their thinking that mere physical descent from Abraham made them acceptable to God. In one of His most powerful denunciations of bankrupt Judaism, Jesus said: "I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ... If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father" (John 8:37, 39–40, 44). [MacArthur, 74]

"Who are those who can rightly claim to be children of Abraham?"
... those of faith ...

"sons" vs. "children" - biblical concept of inheritance is preserved through the "sonship" language.

Cf. 4:5-7

Cf. inclusio at end of chapt.

Mentioned William Herschel a moment ago . . .

There's more to the story. He was declared by the King to be not guilty, but not only that, he was granted knighthood. From that point on he was one of King George's knights, honored t/o the UK as Sir William Herschel. He was not only justified, he also became a friend of the king. [Adapted from Ryken, 104-05]

Justification by faith alone not only removes the source of alienation (sin); it places us in a favored relationship with God (X's perfect R.)