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Galatians

...just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Galatians 3:6

In the previous verse, Paul asked a question of the Galatians. Now in verse 6, and because of the obvious nature of a proper response, he skips the answer entirely. Instead, he simply moves into an illustration of the answer. The illustration is not from the time of the law, but rather from before the giving of the law. Further, it involves the great man of faith to the Hebrew people, Father Abraham.

And so, in his illustration, he begins with "...just as Abraham." If one were to pull out any example of faith in God and in His promises, Abraham is the logical person to choose. The record of his life demonstrates a reliance on the Lord at a time when such reliance was unknown to the ancient world. Because of this, the example Paul gives will show that a precedent had been set which preempts righteousness coming through the law. Instead, "Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"

As the law was still hundreds of years later in history, then this demonstrates that righteousness is not something granted by the law. If he was granted righteousness apart from the law, then it shows that this is the standard and proper way for people to be saved in this manner at any and all points in history.

Paul's quoting of this passage from Genesis is that of the Greek translation of it. It is the same quote that he made, and with the same intent, as in Romans 4:3; that of the timing of God's declaration of righteousness. Not only was Genesis 15:6 prior to the giving of the law, but it also came several chapters and many years before the sign of circumcision.

Circumcision was mandated in Genesis 17 when Abraham was 99 years old and when Ishmael was 13. However, Genesis 15 was prior to the conception and birth of Ishmael. Therefore, the declaration of righteousness was at least 14 years earlier, possibly more. Further, Abraham's offering of Isaac in Genesis 22, and which is noted in James 2, came many long years after that.

Because Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness prior to either of these acts, as well as prior to the giving of the law, then none of these could have had any bearing at all upon his declaration of righteousness.

As a side note, this verse completely and entirely demonstrates that the doctrine of regeneration held to by Calvinists is wrong. Faith, which comes from within the man, results in justification. A man is not "regenerated" first in order to believe, as if God were injecting him with something externally in order for the act to occur. Further, to demonstrate that "faith" is not a "work," we can contemplate the following argument -

1) Deeds of the law, or works, do not lead to justification (as noted in Romans 3:28).

2a) "Faith" is not something required within the context of the law. The law is of works and demands perfect obedience (Romans 3:19, 20 & Galatians 3:11).

2b) But by faith a person is justified and declared righteous (Romans 3:28, Galatians 3:24)

3) Therefore, because the law demands works, and faith is not a requirement under the law, then faith cannot be a work; it is something entirely different.

It is completely evident, fully supportable, and biblically correct to note from this one verse that, 1) belief is an act of the free will of man; 2) it is not placed in man through a nebulous process of being "regenerated to believe" by which he then believes; and that 3) this faith is in no way considered a work.

Therefore, the truth of Scripture indicates, from the first pages of Genesis, that man has been granted free will and that He must exercise that gift in faith. Further this faith must be properly directed and in line with the revealed light which God has provided.

Life application: Doctrine matters.

Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Galatians 3:7

What a knock-out punch for heretics who say that we have to observe the Law of Moses! The Galatians had fallen victim to the Hebrew Roots Movement 2000 years ago and Paul shows them the folly of this. The words here clearly indicate that whether Jew or Gentile, one cannot trace their ancestry back to Abraham unless they live by faith, not deeds of the law.

Paul will continue to explain this and defend it, but his words here alone show the stupidity of reinserting the law as a means of being justified before God. Abraham precedes the law. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore, the law had no bearing on his justification. God was pleased with him because he trusted the word of the Lord.

Because of this example, Paul says, "Therefore." In theology as in mathematics, one plus one equals two. By diverting from the logic which Paul presents, the math is faulty. But when taken in the proper biblical context we can "know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." If Abraham is Scripture's example for this doctrine, and if the law came after this example, then the law cannot be a part of it. In fact, it is opposed to it.

Paul will rigorously describe and defend what he means here, and he will also exactly detail what the purpose of the law is. When he is done with his epistle, it will be shown that the faith of Abraham is to be the faith of the follower of Christ. It is one which says, "I trust God's word with all my heart, and I don't need anything else added to it for me to stand justified in His presence."

Life application: Both in Jesus' time and in ours, the very people who claim their ancestry descends from Abraham are the same people who have failed to see what Scripture teaches about him. They are indeed impressed with their own attempts at earning righteousness, but they ignore the righteousness of God in Christ. Let us not follow such a perverse path. Have faith in Christ and in Him alone.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." Galatians 3:8

As a reminder, Paul is writing to the Galatians who had been caught up in an ancient version of the Hebrew Roots Movement. They had been duped into believing that they would be more pleasing to God, and could only stand justified before Him, by observing the law and all of the practices of the Jewish culture. Paul has been demonstrating what a bunch of malarkey that actually is. In the previous verse he said -

"Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."

Now, building upon that, he turns to Scripture. In doing so, he does something extraordinary by personifying it. "And the Scripture, foreseeing..." He has made a connection to Scripture and its power to reveal the future. As only God can do that, He has definitely identified Scripture as God's infallible word. What it proclaims is the same as what God foresaw and then recorded for us.

In this, he says that what Scripture foresaw was "that God would justify the Gentiles by faith." However, the word "justify" is in the present tense. Therefore, it should say, "...justifies the Gentiles by faith." In other words, at any point in all of history, the means of justification is the same. Enoch was not a Jew and yet he is recorded in a favorable light as having pleased God. Ruth was brought into the fold of the covenant people by faith. And any person, from any nation today, is justified by that same means - faith.

In what Scripture foresaw concerning this, it "preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand." The "gospel" is the "good news" and so this is what Scripture foresaw. The good news would be proclaimed. The hint of this is found in the words to Abraham which said, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." This is actually a mixing of two verses, Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 18:18. Taken together, they give the sum of what Paul is now citing.

What he is saying is that all nations shall be blessed in the same way that Abraham was blessed, which is by faith in the promises of God. In other words, it is not saying that the nations will be blessed through his posterity, meaning Christ, but rather that the way in which Abraham was blessed is the same as the way the Gentiles would be blessed. It would be through faith, meaning faith in Christ, which would justify them. This is certain based on the next verse to be analyzed.

It is true that this faith was only made possible because of the coming of Christ, but faith is the object of what Paul is speaking of. Faith in Christ is the explanation of the type of faith necessary to have proper faith.

Life application: If we stand justified by faith in Christ, then we are not justified by works of the law. Therefore, reinserting the law is a rejection of Christ. Don't reinsert the law. Instead, trust in Christ alone for your right standing with God.

So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. Galatians 3:9

This is a modification of verse 7 which said, "Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." In the near repetition, Paul is emphatically stressing the connection between those who believe apart from works with Abraham, the great hero of Hebrew faith. This is because the Jews traced their lineage back to him. He was the first person noted as a Hebrew and he is who the Jews look to for the beginning of what constitutes their cultural life. Paul shows that not all who are from Abraham are actually of Abraham and do not possess the blessing he did. And those who possess the same faith as he did (which predated the Law of Moses) are counted as being blessed with him.

Taking verses 7 and 9 together, the truth is revealed that those who possess his same faith are blessed in him and they are also blessed with him. Because of faith in the promises of Christ we become a part of the same family, stemming back to Abraham.

Concerning the two words "with" and "believing," Vincent's Word Studies gives a reasonable analysis of what they are referring to -

With - "Not equals like or as, but in fellowship with. Believers are regarded as homogeneous with Abraham, and as thus sharing the blessing which began in him."

Believing - "Those who are of the faith are one in blessing with him whose characteristic was faith."

Life application: If one is relying on works of the law to be pleasing to God, then he is not in fellowship with Abraham, the great father of the faith. He does not bear the same characteristics which he bore. Instead, his circumcision is merely an outward sign without any true connection to what made him righteous in the first place. The reason for this is that Christ is the end of the law for all who believe. As the law is ended in Christ, the faith which he possesses in Him is the same faith that Abraham possessed which predated that same law. The promise was made; Abraham believed. The promise was fulfilled; we are expected to believe.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Galatians 3:10

The words of this verse seem harsh against the law itself, but this is not the case. One might ask, "Why would God give a law which then brought a curse?" Paul will, in time, answer this. But what is obvious is that this is so. If one is under the law, there are certain requirements which must be met. However, it is obvious that none could meet them as is to be directly inferred from the law itself.

Leviticus 23:26-32 prescribes a Day of Atonement for the people of Israel. It was a day which was given for the atoning of the sins of the people. If the people did not sin, then such a day would be unnecessary. However, this day was not just for those who sinned and not for those who "didn't sin." In verses 29 & 30, it says this

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"For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people."

Further, the fact that tablets of the testimony were placed within the Ark of the Covenant, and then covered with the mercy seat, implies that mercy was required for what was contained within the ark. If it were not so, there would be no need for a mercy seat.

Therefore, it was the assumption of the law itself that every person would require atonement each year. None were exempt from observing the Day of Atonement because all had broken the very same law which prescribed the giving of this day. This is why Paul then cites the law itself by saying, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

He cites the substance (not a direct quotation) of Deuteronomy 27:26. Deuteronomy 27 goes through a long list of curses for those who violate the law. It then sums up all of those curses with verse 26. However, the listed curses of chapter 27 are merely a portion of all of the other precepts of the law. In other words, the curse of verse 26 is not limited to the list found in chapter 27; those curses are one part of the whole law. And this law includes the Day of Atonement rites.

Therefore, if a Day of Atonement is mandated, then one was required to observe it in acknowledgement of the guilt they bore before God. If they didn't observe the day (maybe because of trusting in their own righteousness, or for whatever reason), then they were cursed for not fulfilling the words of the law. However, if they did observe it, there was the acknowledgment that they needed the atonement for having not observed the law.

Therefore, the law itself was based on grace. The precepts of the law could only bring condemnation, but the law understood this and thus it offered this annual grace. If one relied on "works of the law," they stood condemned before God and were under a curse. This doesn't not mean that they weren't expected to adhere to the law, but that they were not to trust in their adherence to the law in order to be justified. They were to trust in the continued grace of God.

In the verses ahead, Paul will continue to explain the purpose of the law and then detail the reason for Christ's coming in relation to that law.

Life application: Paul has noted that any who attempt to be justified by works of the law (meaning the Law of Moses) are under a curse. If this is where you have

placed your hope, then your condemnation is just. Put away your self-idolatry and place your faith in Christ's fulfillment of the law.