**Lesson – 5 Old Testament Faith**

**Read for your study:** [*Gal. 3:1–14*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+3:1-14), [*Rom. 1:2*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+1:2), [*4:3*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+4:3), [*Gen. 15:6*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+15:6), [*12:1–3*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+12:1-3), [*Lev. 17:11*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev+17:11), [*2 Cor. 5:21*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2Cor+5:21).

**Memory Text:** “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” ([*Galatians 3*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+3:13)[*:13*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil+2:2), ESV).

**Introduction:** Paul has been defining and defending the true nature of the Gospel as a gospel of grace through faith. Now he turns to the problem that legalism had caused in churches of Galatia. Some believers had turned from spiritual freedom to legalistic slavery. God’s plan of salvation and sanctification is by grace through faith and legalism does not bring salvation but bondage. The argument he uses is based on the Galatians’ personal experience with Christ when they were saved. How were they saved? How did they receive the Spirit of God? Was it through legalistic observances or was it by having an obedient faith?

The passage which we are studying reveals a serious rift in the relationship which once existed between Paul and the Galatians. While Paul had taken the Galatians’ error seriously, the Galatians themselves had taken the matter personally. Their warmth and love for Paul had cooled to a chilling aloofness. There was a distance between these once intimate brothers and sisters which was not to be measured in miles. Let us dive into our study and see how Paul bridges that gap with the Galatians!

**The Foolish Galatians:** Read **Galatians 3:1-5**

There are at least three reasons for the widening gap between them:

* **First, their relationship was affected by the influence of the Judaizers**. They had actively undermined Paul’s apostleship, his message, and his ministry which we have dealt with in our previous lessons. It is evident that many had come to believe the apostle’s critics.
* **Second, Paul’s strictness drained the relationship**. Paul had been quite critical. We do not know all that had previously transpired, but the Book of Galatians itself gives adequate evidence of Paul’s strong reaction to the reports he had received about the Galatian churches. Chapter 1 began with Paul’s bewildered disappointment at the change in doctrine which had already occurred, but this bewilderment quickly changed to blunt severity. Paul subsequently condemned those who had taught such error. Paul was not as harsh to the Galatians, but he did make it clear that they were foolish to have believed such teaching **(cf. 3:1).** Because of Paul’s stern words the Galatians were rebuffed.
* **The third reason for the deteriorating relationship between Paul and the Galatians was to be found in the Galatians themselves**. It is a part of man’s nature to take criticism or correction personally, especially when we are at fault. You will recall that Adam and Eve communed with God every evening, until they sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit. When they heard the sound of the Lord’s coming, they immediately sought to hide themselves from Him. God had done nothing wrong; the wrong was done by Adam and Eve. Their sin had resulted in a separation.

Paul calls on his converts to recall what took place when they first responded to the gospel in verse 1. You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Chris was publicly (clearly) portrayed as having been crucified?

**Question: What is implied by the expression: “Before your very eyes you had a clear description of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross”? (Galatians 3:1)**

We see that Paul is both **mystified** and **frustrated** over the Galatians’ conduct and it is evident from the manner in which he addresses them (as foolish). The Judaizers had convinced them that their experience was not complete. They needed something else. The Galatian believers had become so fascinated by their false teachers’ arguments that they had become bewitched.
Magic was common in Paul’s day **(Acts 8: 9-11; 13:6f).** Magicians or sorcerers used optical illusions and satanic power to perform their rites. The word bewitched is related to witchcraft. It means to cast a spell upon someone through the power of evil or the evil eye. Paul therefore calls them foolish or spiritually dull, senseless, mindless or ‘stupid’. Certainly they remembered who and what saved them.
Paul had portrayed or verbally pictured for them the Gospel. The Holy Spirit had caused their minds and hearts to see the crucifixion of Christ Jesus. That picture of Christ "having been crucified" for their salvation was to remain (perfect passive ptc- an accomplished fact with present results) in their minds, which is what they were to continue to focus upon it. But their mind’s eye had been bewitched. They had come under the power of the evil eye and had gazed at it so long that they were transfixed by it. If the Galatians had kept their eyes where they belonged, upon Christ crucified, this bewitchment would never have happened. Because the Galatians had lost mental sight of Jesus they had fallen prey or had become bewitched. ‘They had turned from Calvary to Sinai, from Son-ship to slavery, from liberty and freedom to legalism and bondage, from faith to works, from Christ to ceremonies’ expresses **(Criswell, p. 74).**

**Grounded in Scripture:**

After having defended his gospel of justification by faith in front of the apostles in Jerusalem **(**[***Gal. 2:1–10***](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+2:1-10)**)** and to the personal experience of the Galatians themselves **(Gal. 3:1–5),** Paul now turns to the objective evidence of the Word of God.

We never judge the Scriptures by our experience; we test our experience by the Word of God. Scripture speaks often of the importance of standing firm. Peter warns us that the devil is like a man-eating lion, and exhorts us to “Resist him, standing firm in the faith…” **(1 Peter 5:9 NIV).** Paul tells us to “…put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then…” **(Ephesians 6:13-14 NIV**). He exhorts us to “…stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” **(Colossians 4:12 NIV).** In each of the letters to the churches in **Revelation, chapters 2 and 3**, there is a wonderful promise to the one who **overcomes.**

In verses 1-5 Paul asked six questions. In this next section beginning in **Galatians 3:6** he quotes six Old Testament Scriptures. His idea is again to prove that salvation is by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law.

The Judaizers wanted to return the church to the Law, so Paul quotes from some pivotal passage concerning the law. The point is that a relationship based on faith and not on law is the way to right standing with God. Believers are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of law.

Paul turned to discuss the biblical or Old Testament basis to confirm his gospel. He focused on the story of Abraham and its partial fulfillment when the children of Israel came out of Egyptian slavery. God’s promise was fulfilled. The children of Israel had nothing to do with the plagues or the deliverance from Egypt. All they had to do was march out.

There is excellent evidence suggesting that Paul was the first or earliest writer of the New Testament. So, when he talked about evidence from Scripture, the only evidence he could have been talking about was the Old Testament.

Abraham was the all important father figure in Judaism so first Paul quotes Abraham as his authority. He states that Abraham was justified by faith not law. Even so Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

Paul begins by quoting Moses to show that God’s righteousness was placed in Abraham’s account only because he believed God’s promise **(Gen. 15:6).** Despite his and Sarah’s advanced ages, Abraham believed God’s promise to give him an heir in Isaac **(Rom. 4:16-25).** Abraham believed God’s promise in spite of it being biologically impossible. Abraham placed his faith in God and His promise and God gave him His righteousness even before the law came into existence, even though the living out of his faith was far from perfect.
**Note:** If we look at our own sins, it is impossible for us to be saved but God has promised to save all who believe in His Son. If we will believe God like Abraham, God will do the impossible. Just like in Abraham’s case when a sinner trusts Christ, God’s righteousness is accredited to his account.
**Lesson:** God takes the righteousness of Christ and places it in your account when you by faith receive Christ. When you trust Jesus it is like God writes righteousness over your sins. This means that the record of sin is always clean before God (by His blood) and a right standing is given in its place. The believer therefore can never be brought into judgment for his sins for God has called him righteous in Christ.

A great Scriptural example of **standing firm** or **‘grounded in faith’** is given by Paul: “We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” **(2 Corinthians 4:8-9 NIV).** We can say that God is increasingly calling on us to say, “Whatever the circumstances, however difficult and discouraging things may appear, I believe in a God who is greater than the circumstances, and I will stand firm.”

**The Gospel in the Old Testament:**

**Verse 8** includes the prophecy that it is by faith that the Gentiles also are justified. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in You.” Paul writes that not only was the gospel preached to Abraham, but it was God who preached it; so, it must have been the true gospel.

God’s foundational promise or covenant to Abraham was that salvation by faith was for all nations. The prophecy, "In you shall all the Nations be blessed" is a foreshadowing of the Gospel **(Gen 12:3; 18:18)**. Scripture proposes that from the very beginning of Abraham’s relationship with God that the blessing of the promised salvation would be for a people of faith. From other Scriptures we understand that "in you" was in Abraham’s seed **(Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14),** meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no other name given among where by you must be saved **(Acts 4:12)**. The gospel was first proclaimed to Abraham apart from and before the law.

**Question:** Have we ever been tempted to think that our works might have something to do with our salvation? What do we mean when we say that we are saved by faith alone? Why is it important to recognize that our works cannot save us?

Verse 9 indicates that the blessings of God come as they always have, by means of faith in God and His promises. So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

**ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS BASED ON REVELATION**

 **A. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO ABRAHAM...**

 1. In Ur of the Chaldees - [**Ac 7:2-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ac%207.2-4)**;** [**Gen 15:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2015.7)

 2. At Haran of Mesopotamia - [**Gen 12:1-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2012.1-4)

 3. At Shechem in Canann - [**Gen 12:6-7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2012.6-7)

 4. After Lot moved to Sodom - [**Gen 13:14-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2013.14-17)

 5. And many times more - cf. [**Gen 15:1-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2015.1-17)**;** [**17:1-27**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2017.1-27)**;** [**18:1-33**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2018.1-33)**;** [**22:1-19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2022.1-19)

**By revealing Himself to Abraham, God provided Abraham ample evidence for him to place his faith and trust in God.**

 **B. OUR FAITH MUST BE BASED UPON REVELATION...**

 1. Not that God reveals Himself to us as He did to Abraham

 2. But faith comes through the Word of God - cf. [**Ro 10:17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ro%2010.17)

 a. It contains evidence that we might believe - [**Jn 20:30-31**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Jn%2020.30-31)

 b. The more we read, the more God is revealed to us, especially

 in the person of His Son Jesus Christ!

**If we desire to have "The Faith Of Abraham", we must be receptive to God's revelation of Himself through His Word!**

**ABRAHAM TRUSTED IN GOD, NOT HIS WORKS. Though he had a faith that works, he did not trust in his works; rather in God who justifies the ungodly (cf.** [**Ro 4:5-8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ro%204.5-8)**)**

**In Conclusion, there are three things we can learn from Abraham’s faith:**

1. Faith is more than just a belief in God. **(James 2:19)** Clearly, Abraham had a personal relationship with the Divine.
2. Did God practice progressive revelation on Abraham? Could you call that present truth? Didn’t He come back again and again, each time giving a little more information? Could that be described as present truth? When God gives us a new revelation, does that nullify what He has said before? Or, does any new revelation have to agree with what God has said previously?
3. When God finally said to Abraham, “I will come back next year at this time, and you will have a son,” what was Abraham’s response? **(Genesis 18:1-15; Romans 9:9)** Prior to that in **Genesis 17:9-16**, hadn’t God already set certain conditions on His covenant? Abraham not only questioned God’s covenant, he laughed! **(Genesis 17:17)** Abraham has a lot of failings spelled out on the pages of Scripture. **Yet, he chose to believe God when God said astonishing things. And God called Abraham His friend.** The final test before the on looking universe was proof that they were real friends. Abraham trusted God, believing that anything God asked him to do was for a good reason.

The conclusion is that the old and new testaments or dispensations are united. All believers dwell under the tent of faith. All persons of faith for all time stand together with Abraham, the pioneer of a faith-based relationship with God, for Abraham showed Old testament Faith!

**Thought Question: What does God ask us to do on our side of this covenant relationship we call faith? Do we all get that kind of test?**

**God Bless You!!!**