

Galatians: Free in Christ
Just Like Abraham
Galatians 3:6-9

The Galatians received the Spirit, grew in grace, suffered hardships, and witnessed miracles all by faith. Was this a new invention of knowing and following God? Paul has argued that the Gentiles don't need to become Jews in order to be Christians. They only need to have faith, the same faith that God's people have always had—the faith of father Abraham. Faith connects us to God, His word, His people and His promises.

Same Faith & Righteousness

Abraham is not a random inspirational example of faith. Paul cites him because he is the father of our faith, the man God used to gather His people (Rom. 4:16). He quotes Genesis 15:6 when Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (v6). Faith here is not his righteousness, as if God sees that Abraham believes Him and labels that righteousness. Abraham had been an idolater, and was just complaining that his servant Eliezer was his only heir (Gen. 15:2). But when God said his descendants would outnumber the stars, he believed, and through belief righteousness was imputed. Abraham looked forward, as Jesus says, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (Jn. 8:56). Here is the great Abraham, and here are the floundering Galatians who nonetheless trusted *just as* Abraham did (v6). Faith is the thing that receives the righteousness which is reckoned/accounted/imputed/credited to us, our status in Christ. Abraham trusted in Jesus, and we trust in Jesus, which is different than merely believing God exists (Jms. 2:19). Christ's righteousness comes from outside us, is always received by faith, and even the faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). The fact that God gives the same faith to us that He gave to Abraham is totally humbling. It's such an enormous gift that if you get it upside down, it's totally inflating.

Same Father & Gospel

The timing here is important. When was righteousness imputed to Abraham? When he was still uncircumcised (Rom. 4:9-10). He is the father of the Jews, but not only the Jews, “that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also” (Rom. 4:11). To be a son of Abraham you can be circumcised or uncircumcised, male or female, rich or poor, young or old, slave or free, smart or slow. The only thing that gets you into his family is faith (v7). You would think that of all signs circumcision would deter pride, but the human heart is wicked deceitful. We see Paul's confidence in Scripture, personifying it as though God Himself is speaking: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand” (v8). Obviously God spoke to Abraham, and later Moses wrote it down, but God orchestrated that and His

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Scriptures remain. Abraham trusted God, but trusted Him to do what? “In you shall all the nations be blessed” (v8; Gen. 12:3, 17:5, 18:18). He believed the gospel, cause and effect, and part of the effect is the salvation of the Gentiles. This was God’s plan from the beginning. Abraham did not only believe in God; He believed God would do what He said. When we preach the gospel, we’re telling someone about what Jesus accomplished: the salvation of the world. Whether they believe it, or we believe it for that matter, makes no difference to the objective truth of the cross and the salvation that has come and is coming to the world.

Same Blessing

“So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham” (v9).

All the nations are blessed *in* Abraham, but we are also blessed *with* him. His blessing is ours. We don’t feel like the nations or all the families of the earth are being blessed through us, but neither did he. For a long time he and Sarah had no child or home. He dealt with trouble in Egypt, problems with his nephew Lot, war with kings, foolish polygamy, conflict with Hagar and Ishmael, and the sacrifice of Isaac. If you asked Abraham what he was doing, would he have responded: “Blessing and inheriting the world”? And yet this is exactly what he was doing. He had the stars stretched before his eyes, and we’ve had Jesus Christ stretched before ours. To be blessed with Abraham is not to get some treats at the same time he does. It’s to overcome the world: “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn. 5:5). Abraham had far less to go on by what he could see than we do, but he believed God anyway. So must we.