



World Christian Fellowship

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Galatians

Lesson 25

Work or Grace Part 01

Galatians 3:6-9, *just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”⁷ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸And 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.”⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*

The gospel of Jesus Christ is revealed in the Bible:

God’s plan of salvation through faith alone, apart from works.

Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works.

Any work is heresy!

- some works,
- all works,
- ceremonial works,
- ritualistic works,
- philanthropic works,
- moral works, and

- religious works.

So, when Satan adds anything to faith alone, that is the corruption of the gospel.

Many people think that somehow God owes them heaven because they are

- good persons,
- religious persons,
- moral persons,
- philanthropic persons, and
- they are not criminals.

In the last lesson we saw its our responsibility to guard the Gospel and proclaiming it.

Paul detailed the Trinitarian work in the salvation of the believers.

1. Personal Experience with Jesus Christ
2. Personal Experience with Holy Spirit
3. The Heavenly Father who provides

So, everyone ought to

- ✓ guard the truth,
- ✓ preach the truth,
- ✓ fight for the truth,
- ✓ contend for the truth, and
- ✓ protect others from the bewitching errors.

Salvation is by grace, through faith, apart from works.

Anything added to this is heresy and bewitching heresy. Unbelievers are bewitched in all kinds of false religions of works, that includes false forms of Christianity.

Jailer at the Philippi prison asked Apostle Paul.

Acts 16:30, *And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

Paul said very clearly, you must believe in Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:31, *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Apostle John wrote in Gospel.

John 1:12, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*

Jesus spoke about this Nicodemus

John 3:15-16, *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Paul in his Epistle to Ephesians made it so clear that its not of any of our works.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

The enemies of the Gospel always add to the gospel of grace and faith with works, as a necessary means to receive salvation, forgiveness, and heaven.

But from the Scripture that there are no works by which we can earn righteousness.

Now to make sure that there are no works involved Apostle Paul is going to use the very core belief of the Judaizers. Paul is going to use the Old Testament to show its only faith not works.

We are going to see very so important thing that salvation has always been by faith alone, even in the Old Testament!

There are many people think that the salvation for the Old Testament and the New Testaments are different, but not so. There was not a salvation by works in the Old Testament, and by faith in the New. It is always been by faith alone!

For the Judaizers and for almost every Jew, Abraham is their hero. Not only now even the times of Jesus they were frequently argue with Jesus saying that they are children of Abraham. Even now many people think that they are fine with God because of their natural Jewish origin.

They would set their eternity on their Abrahamic ancestry.
They would go back as far as Abraham!

Why?

Because Abraham is the father of that nation.

So, Galatians 3:6-9, the portion what we are going to see now, Paul is showing the proof that Old Testament salvation is by faith alone, and the proof is Abraham.

They want Abraham to defend their works system.

Hence Paul is taking Abraham to defend faith alone using Abraham.

V6, just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

All the Jews they saw Abraham as circumcised, and a law-keeper. There are some serious problems with that.

God’s Purpose of Calling out people for Himself:

- ❖ God is going to call out a people for Himself.
- ❖ Those people to whom He will give His divine revelation.
- ❖ People who will symbolise the prophets,
- ❖ People who will be His witness nation in the world.

The temporal nation of Israel was under the protection of God as a nation to be a witness for Him. But they were not granted personal salvation.

Salvation is always

- ✓ Personal,
- ✓ Internal, and
- ✓ Spiritual.

Salvation is NEVER,

- ✓ National,
- ✓ External, and
- ✓ Physical.

The nation of Israel to whom God will give His revelation, who are to be His witness. They are to represent the True Living God in a world of many gods, polytheistic nations.

Let us go back see the events took place in Abraham's life.

Genesis 12:1-5, *Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* ⁴*So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Then Abram took Sarai his*

wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

God is going to bless them, so they could bless the world.

Abram is a believer now in the true God.

Genesis 14:22, *But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth,*

This shows Abram has abandoned all the gods of his ancient family.

Genesis 15:1-6, *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." ²But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" ⁴And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." ⁵Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

This is a promise against all reality and probability. Abram is an old man married to an old lady and they can't have children. Abram has no offspring, and he believes that the Lord is going to give him children like the sand of the sea or the stars of heaven.

“He believed in the Lord and accounted it to him for righteousness.”

It was Abraham's faith that caused God to credit him with divine righteousness. There is salvation by faith. Abraham is the prototype of faith. He is not the first person who believed.

Hebrews 11:4, “By faith Abel”

Hebrews 11:5, “By faith Enoch,”

Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah,”

Hebrews 11:8, “By faith Abraham,”

Hebrews 11:11, “By faith Sarah”

Abraham becomes a kind of father of faith to all succeeding generations of believers.

He is not just father of Jewish people physically but spiritually and he is the prototype for all who believe God through human history.

God gives Abraham a nation physically, but also through that nation comes a Messiah, and through that Messiah comes a

world family by faith. That is inherent in the promise of Genesis chapter 12.

Jews would say, Abraham is the pattern. Yes, Abraham believed God, but he was circumcised.

Genesis 16

There's some doubt that crept in about just exactly how God was going to provide this seed. So, Sarah suggests he make one of the servants in the house pregnant. Hagar, maid of Sarah, got pregnant and bore Ishmael, who fathered the Arab people. That was a pain that keeps on throughout all human history, as the Arab-Israeli conflict goes back to Hagar and Ishmael.

Abraham Eighty-six years old now, ten years have gone past. Still there is no child.

Genesis 17

Abraham is ninety-nine years old the Lord comes to him. The Lord promises again.

Genesis 17:9-14, *And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall*

be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

Abraham was circumcised.

When God promised Abraham and he believed God in Genesis 15:6 he was 86 years old.

Now when God gave the circumcision law to Abraham and his circumcision took place when Abraham 99 years old.

So at least a gap of 14 years.

Abraham was circumcised as an old man. Salvation didn't come to him because of circumcision.

Also note another important thing.

The law was not given for about 400 hundred years after Abraham. So, Abraham certainly was not saved by observing the law and ceremony of Moses.

There was no law.

There was no circumcision when Abraham was reckoned as righteous.

Exactly this is what Apostle Paul was pointing to the Judaizers.

What is the point of circumcision?

Physical Viewpoint:

It had a preservative effect.

Throughout history, Jewish women have had the lowest rate of diseases, transmittable diseases, because circumcision eliminates the possibility of things being introduced into a woman's body by the folds of the foreskin. So, God was protecting them from diseases, as He promised He will in Exodus.

Spiritual Viewpoint:

That was a symbol that they needed to be cleansed at personal level.

Circumcise your hearts.

Deuteronomy 10:16, *Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.*

Deuteronomy 30:6, *And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

Jeremiah 4:4, *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings.”*

In the New Testament,

Colossians 2:11, *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

That was not required of the Gentiles at all.

Philippians 3:3, *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,*

Ours is a spiritual cleansing.

Why was that particular symbol of circumcision chosen?

Because nowhere is depravity more manifest than in procreation. If you want to know whether a man is a sinner, just look at every single human being he has ever produced.

You are sinful at a core level.

You need a profound cleansing.

When Abraham was justified, declared righteous by God, he was neither circumcised, nor aware of the Mosaic law, or any ceremonies.

Salvation was apart from law-keeping, apart from circumcision. Abraham was a Gentile when God saved him.

Dramatic test of faith of Abraham

Now the promised child Isaac is with Abraham.

Genesis 22:1-2 &10-11, *Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

¹⁰ *And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."*

Abraham lifts the knife to offer his son as a sacrifice.

Why would he do that?

Because he believed that if Isaac died, God would raise him from the dead, according to Hebrews 11.

Abraham trusted God to such a degree, that he believed he and Sarah, as old and barren, would have a massive family that would stretch across the earth. If need be to fulfil that when all there was one son Isaac, God would raise him from the dead. That's all God wanted to show was his faith and he pulled his knife back and provided a ram, which was a picture of the sacrifice of Christ to come.

Paul wrote this very beautifully in the Letter to Romans.

Romans 4:3-5, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*⁴ *Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*⁵ *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,*

Righteousness came to Abraham from God because he believed.

Was he righteous?

No.

Certainly, Abraham was not righteous when he went in and got his servant pregnant. But God justifies the ungodly whose faith is credited as righteousness.

Paul quotes from David from **Psalms 32**.

Romans 4:6-10, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁷“Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; ⁸Blessed *is the* man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” ⁹*Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.* ¹⁰*How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.*

Was Abraham circumcised or uncircumcised?

Well, he was uncircumcised.

The law:

Did he obey the law?

There was no law.

This is foundational!

The Jews thought Abraham was enough.

John the Baptist comes preaching to the Jews to repent. Basically, his message was that they are no better than pagans. You need to be baptised, I am here to baptise you.

Guess who got baptised?

The only people that were baptized in their world were Gentiles who wanted to become proselytes to Judaism.

So, it was a proselyte baptism.

Let us look at the preaching of John the Baptist for a minute.

Matthew 3:7-10, *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Even today, sadly many Jewish people still believing Abraham’s ancestry for their salvation.

Jesus also encountered the same with the Jewish leaders.

Jesus tells them they don’t know the truth, they don’t know the gospel. They don’t know the truth about God, they don’t know the truth about salvation.

John 8:32-44, *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”³³ They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”*

³⁴*Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.³⁶ Therefore if the Son*

makes you free, you shall be free indeed. ³⁷ “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.”

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹ You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Abraham believed, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The Jewish people did not believe, and they were pronounced to be doomed to divine wrath. Their attitude was that righteousness was some debt God owed them because they were the children of Abraham. But Abraham’s salvation was graciously granted to him by faith, and not by works, and

not by circumcision, and not by keeping the law. “And you are not the sons of Abraham.”

John 8:56, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*”

Abraham didn't know who Christ would be specifically, but he knew God was going to provide a sacrifice. God was going to provide an acceptable offering. He knew God was going to fulfil His promise of an atonement for sin, which would satisfy the justice of God, and by which God could reckon righteousness to a believer.

Abraham died in faith, never saw the promise. All those in Hebrews 11 died in faith, never saw the promise; but they all believed the promise was to come. “Abraham saw My day and rejoiced.”

V 7-8,

Galatians 4:30, *Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”*

- ✓ The Scripture speaks!
- ✓ God speaks!

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith,” – always – “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.

You are a man of faith, you were justified by faith, and from that faith, that model of faith, will come a heritage of faith from all the nations throughout redemptive history.’” The issue is not racial genealogy, it is the heritage of faith, faith, faith.

The Scripture preached the gospel, the good news.

What is the good news?

The whole world will be blessed.

How will they be blessed?

By faith in the truth that God has revealed, you will receive divine righteousness credited to your account by faith alone. That’s the gospel.

Conclusion:

Let us finish with this wonderful story of Syrian Commander Naaman.

2 Kings 5

Naaman was a Syrian army commander who kept coming over into the land of Israel and massacring people and stealing things. The Lord struck him with leprosy. The servant girl tells

about Prophet Elisha. Naaman comes Elisha. Elisha does not even come out asking him to go take a dip in the river Jordan seven times. Naaman obeys the words of Elisha and gets healed.

This is a Syrian, a Gentile, Elisha the prophet communicates the truth to him, the truth that he desperately needed to hear.

Let us read the declaration of Naaman.

2 Kings 5:15-16, *And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant."*

¹⁶ *But he said, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused.*

What happened?

The prophet Elisha said to him

2 kings 5:19, *'Go in peace.'*"

There you have the salvation of a Syrian Gentile by believing in the true and living God.

That's always the way of salvation and there is no other way.

So, as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Through Abraham will come the line of the Messiah.

Through the Messiah will come the sacrifice to provide that salvation to all who believe.

Then the salvation will stretch to the world.
All the nations will be blessed.

Abraham will be the father, in a prototypical sense, of all who believe.

V 9, *“So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham,”*

“the believer” That becomes the New Testament word to identify Christians, the believer.

It’s always faith, faith alone. God asks nothing more of us.

Faith is not a righteous work, faith is an empty hand receiving righteousness.