



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Biblical Beginnings of Justification By Faith

GALATIANS 3.6-14

2/13/13

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / Don.Garner@capitolcom.org

“Let’s start at the very beginning. A very good place to start.” So sings, Maria in The Sound of Music, and so we will do this week in regards to the beginnings of what is perhaps the most crucial of all Christian doctrines—justification by faith.

Paul began the doctrinal section of his letter by employing the Socratic Method as he shot six questions in rapid-fire succession at the readers. Each question pointed to their own personal beginnings in their Christian experience. Did you start out in your Christian experience through your faith in Christ or by submitting yourselves to the works of the law?

Next Paul takes the reader back to the beginnings of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. Having begun to make his case by use of subjective personal experience he now shifts his argument to focus on the objective word of God. Paul urges you to consider the Biblical beginnings of justification by faith.

Galatians 3.6-14: 6just as Abraham “believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.” 7Therefore, 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.” 9So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

10For 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.” 11But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

13Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 40that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

FAITH BLESSED FROM THE BEGINNING (6-9)

The Principle of First Mention is a well-established tenet of Biblical interpretation. When studying an important word or concept in Scripture, you can learn much from its introduction or first mention in the Bible. Paul begins at the very beginning in regards to justification by faith. The Biblical record of the life of Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, is where we first identify this core Christian truth. All Jews proudly considered themselves among the sons of Abraham. Whatever sects of Judaism may have existed at the time, they all worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“FORESEEING THAT GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE GENTILES BY FAITH...”

Paul carefully points to faith as the basis of Abraham’s being accounted as righteous before God. Beyond that, the promise to bless all the nations through Abraham was given on the same basis. From this Paul concludes that only those who have faith like Abraham are truly sons (children) of Abraham. The blessing promised is to those who have faith common to Abraham’s. Paul refers to the promise given to Abraham as the gospel being preached to him hundreds of years previous to the coming of Christ.

Abraham’s justification by faith and the promise of blessing occurred generations before the law was given and even before Abraham himself was circumcised.

LAW-KEEPING CURSED FROM THE BEGINNING (10-14)

In the Jewish mind, the concepts of blessing and cursing were closely linked. Paul’s opponents have likely argued blessing and cursing in relation to keeping of the Mosaic law. Paul turns to the law itself for his rebuttal. The law makes it clear that the curse of God comes upon those who do not fulfill all

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS LATER)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY: FRIDAY BREAKFAST @ 8AM IN MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (E2.1002)

Texas

Biblical Beginnings of Justification By Faith

its requirements. Everyone who fails in even one point of the law is guilty of transgression. This makes it abundantly clear that no one is justified in the sight of God by law-keeping.

Paul argues that the Old Testament prophets also understood it this way by quoting Habakkuk 2.4, “the just shall live by faith.” As a basis for justification, law-keeping and faith are incompatible. Fact is, you and I will rely on one or the other. We will trust in our ability to live up to God’s righteous standard or we will trust in God’s provision in the finished work of Christ. The Old Testament teaching that faith is the only basis of justification is incompatible with the view that we can be justified in the sight of God by keeping the law.

BUT THAT NO ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS EVIDENT, FOR “THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

If everyone who fails to fulfill the requirements of the law is under the curse, what hope is there? Hope is found only in Christ! The incompatibility of law-keeping and faith is resolved in Christ. He has redeemed us, that is, He has bought us out of bondage to the law and its curse.

He did so by becoming a curse for us. He took the curse of God’s wrath for our failure to keep the law upon Himself. Hanging on a tree was a clear sign of God’s curse. Christ’s death on the cross on your behalf is the basis of your being redeemed from the curse.

CONCLUSION

The final verse in this passage provides a bookend, the other being the first we considered. “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” This verse contains consecutive purpose clauses starting with the word “that.” To what purpose has Christ become a curse for us? He redeemed

us so that we might become partakers of the blessing with Abraham on the basis of our faith in Christ. He became a curse for us so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit on the basis of our faith.

...THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH FAITH.

You and I receive the Spirit of God as a sign and seal of our being adopted by God in Christ. The Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in Christ. He is our teacher, our counselor, our comforter. He provides us the spiritual power and desire to live our lives unto God rather than unto ourselves.

Does your spirit bear witness within you of the presence of God’s Holy Spirit?

Do you share the faith of “believing Abraham?” Or do you think you can live a life “good enough” to be received by God on your own merits?

Is Christ your redeemer? Did He take the curse of the law upon Himself on your behalf?