

Title: Father Abraham: Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith (Part 1)

Text: Galatians 3:6a

Main Idea: Abraham is the father of faith for all who believe

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[i] Scripture Reading and Prayer

6 Just as Abraham BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 So then, understand that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel ahead of time to Abraham: “ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” 9 So then, those of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

[ii] Song: Father Abraham

*Father Abraham had many sons
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them
And so are you
So let's just praise the Lord*

[iii] Song does express truths from Scripture . . .

T/Jews looked at A. as their father (see that in t/OT).

Expressed by Jews of Jesus' day:

Jesus' parable in Luke 16, t/Rich Man suffering in Hades twice uses title “Father Abraham”

Stephen in Acts 7:2 . . . The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia . . .

Jesus in Matt. 3:9 . . . do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

[iv] And God did so!

We were dead stones in a quarry of sin. G. raised us up to believe in JC (makes us children of A.)

Rom. 4:16 TAP connects A. to true faith calling him “the father of us all.”

What we see here in verse 7 ==>

7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

[v] We are looking at vv. 6-9 of Galatians chapter 3

Father Abraham: Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith

[vi] This truth Justification by Faith is central to the gospel

We were introduced to this doctrine back in chapt. 2.

Goes back to Paul’s confrontation of Peter over t/Gospel:

2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

At some point, Peter came to Antioch. This is where Paul started his 1st miss. journ. w/Barnabas (Acts 13). That journey incl. a trip to S. Galatia where these CHs were est.

Antioch became home base for the expansion of Xnty o/s of Jer. (where t/name “Xn” was first used of X's followers).

Antioch was about 200 mi directly N of Jerus. & came to represent Gentile Xnty in contrast to the Jewish CH in Jerus.

2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

Word “condemned” isn't being used here in sense of 1:8-9. Peter wasn't guilty of teaching/believing a false gospel; was guilty of hypocrisy as it related to his behavior.

That's what we saw in vv. 12 & 13 ==>

12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Peter t/Jew “used to eat w/the Gentiles” Not only in fellowship w/them, but also partaking of foods that were considered unclean under t/Law (clean under t/N.C.).

Something changed. “Certain men from James” came for a visit.

There was another group there whom Paul calls “those of the circumcision” (two groups). IOW - the men from James and those of t/circumcision are different people.

May be that “those of the circumcision” refers to t/same Judaizing group described by Luke in Acts 15:1 ==>

... men ... from Judea ... teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised . . . you cannot be saved.”

May be that “those of t/circumcision” were unbelieving Jews – those who outright rejected JC as Messiah.

Whatever the case – Peter began to break fellowship with his Gentile brothers and sisters. Out of fear, he began to “withdraw” & “separate” himself from his Gentile brethren.

His hypocrisy was tied to t/Gospel ==>

14 But when I saw that they were not acting straight-forward concerning the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all: “If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how [is it that] you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

It’s about how t/Gospel is lived.

Is it lived under t/O.C. under Moses or t/New under X?

Our hypocrisy affects our witness.

As we see here, it also affects others.

Hypocrisy is a deadly evil that pollutes our own souls, brings reproach to t/name of X, & perverts t/truth of t/Gospel.

[vii] The great truth of verse 16 ==>

16 Yet we know that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

I take it that Paul is still addressing Peter. Peter “knows” that we are justified/saved by faith alone, not by obed. to law of any kind.

So in chap. 2 we are intro. to t/doctrine of JBFA.

[viii] In chapters 3-4 Paul gives a defense of JBFA

He does so by demonstrating that it is a doctrine that reaches back before t/Law // Israel as a nation. Goes back deep into t/OT, specif. to t/Patr. A.

[ix] Verses 1-5 marked Paul's first defense

Justification by Faith Alone: Don't Forget the Change

That is t/change that t/H.S. brings to a believer in Jesus.

The Galatians' Spiritual Experience Was Received by Believing, not Doing

[x] Six Rhetorical Questions

6 R?'s that Paul asks in rapid-fire succession –

1. Who has bewitched you?
2. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?
3. Are you so foolish?
4. Having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?
5. Did you suffer so many things in vain?

6. Does He provide you w/the Spirit & work miracles among you by t/works of t/Law or by hearing w/faith?

I. Paul's First Defense of Justification by Faith Alone: Don't Forget the Change (3:1-5)

Trinitarian formula in these vv.

First “change” Paul addresses is that brought about by JC →

A. Has Christ Changed You? (3:1)

1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? That’s t/1st ? Paul asks. Who has “bewitched” you? {sum up}

B. Has the Holy Spirit Changed You? (3:2-4)

1. The central question

All t/other ?'s asked in these 5 vv. hinge on and relate to this one. Why Paul prefaces it with==>

2a This is the only thing I want to learn from you:

What is that one thing? ==>

2b . . . did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?

a. “Receive” = Aorist Verb – Past action / Moment of Salvation

Entrance into t/faith // justification.

Central to Paul's theol. (theol. of t/N.T.): when a person comes to faith & is justified that individual receives the gift of the H.S.

2b . . . did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?

By hearing and believing or by doing and obeying?

2. Fourth Question (v. 3)

3 . . . Having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Perf. by t/Flesh – perhaps a veiled reference to circumcision – t/ultimate work of t/flesh so to speak.

3. Fifth Question: Did You Suffering For Nothing? (v. 4)

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

C. Has the Father Changed You? (3:5)

1. Sixth Question: Does He Provide the Spirit by Your Doing or Believing?

5 Does He [implied “the Father”] provide you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?

a. God has done 2 things for them:

(1) He provides them with the Spirit

Idea of “abundantly,” “giving freely and liberally.”

Present tense – t/gift of t/Spirit is not merely in the past but in progress.

(2) worked miracles among them

2 Cor. 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

***I. Paul's First Defense of Justification by Faith Alone:
Don't Forget the Change (3:1-5)***

A. Has Christ Changed You? (3:1)

B. Has the Holy Spirit Changed You? (3:2-4)

C. Has the Father Changed You? (3:5)

That brings us to where we left off (vv. 6-9) ==>

**I. Paul's Second Defense of Justification by Faith Alone:
Abraham**

A. Verse 6 begins with a Conjunction

1. Schoolhouse Rock Song

Conjunction junction, what's your function?

Hooking up words and phrases and clauses

Conjunction junction, how's that function?

*I've got three favorite cars that get most of my job done
("and," "but" and "or")*

Conjunction junction, what's your function?

Hooking up two boxcars and making 'em run right

Milk and honey, bread and butter, peas and rice

Hey, that's nice

6a καθὼς - "Just as"

2. καθὼς can make a strong or loose connection

a. What is the connection between vv. 1-5 and 6-9?

(1) It's a loose connection

Vv. 1-5 related to t/gift of t/H.S. Vv. 6-9 t/faith of A.

Paul is not saying that Abraham received t/HS ISW as t/Gal.

(2) The Gift of the Spirit is unique to the New Covenant

Not to say that t/H.S. wasn't active in t/OT, but it was diff.
Diff. dynamic at work.

OT HS "came upon people" (service). Selective / temporary.
NT, following X's ascension, believers are baptized by t/HS
into t/body, t/univ. CH; indwelt by t/Sp. & sealed unto t/day
of redemption. Permanent.

(3) It's still all about faith / belief

We are b.a. // believe // justified // receive t/gift of t/Sp.

That gift of righteousness is received solely by faith.
Not t/law, good deeds, religiosity – by believing.

We see that A. stands representative in Script. as a prime
example of faith. Taking G. at his word in trusting him.

Abraham is the father of faith for all who believe

**B. Here in Verse 6 of Chapter 3 we have Abraham
Mentioned for the first time in Galatians – but not the Last!**

**1. Abraham is mentioned by name 1x in each of these 4
verses (6-9) Also – 14,16,18, 4:22 – (8x total)**

2. There are lots of personal names in Galatians

Paul 2x; James 3x; Barnabas 3x; Peter 6x (Cephas 4x / Peter
2x); Hagar (A's concubine) 2x; John - Titus - Isaac 1x
David (0x); Moses (0x)

Abraham 8x – more than any other in Gal.

C. Why Abraham?

What is A's signific. that Paul would refer back to him so many times?

Chief OT Patriarch.

As we'll see – A. is t/physical father of t/Jews & t/spiritual father of all believers.

Paul may be arguing out of t/Judaizer's own playbook.

They likely appealed to A. & circum. as support for their argument that t/Law was necessary for salvation.

Problem: A. predated Moses & t/Law. A. was justified by faith alone, not by t/Law or works. Powerful Polemic . . .

D. Who Was Abraham?

"Apart from Jesus Christ, Abraham is probably the most important person in the Bible. Abraham is a giant in Scripture—his stature is far greater than that of Moses, David, or Paul. These latter three were great men, and God used them in great ways, even giving portions of the Scripture to us through them. But each of them would have agreed without qualification that Abraham was his father in faith." [James M. Boice, Ordinary Men Called by God, 12]

1. Go back with me to Genesis 11:27–32 – 2100 BC

27 Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.

a. Abraham is introduced by his former name “Abram”
G. later changes his name from “Abram” = “exalted father” to “Abraham” = “father of many nations.”

28 And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

b. Ur of the Chaldeans

T/city of Ur was in ancient Chaldea – t/land that would later be occupied by Babylon (Chaldeans).

Ruins of Ur are about 150 mi. NW of t/Persian Gulf in present-day Iraq.

c. Ur was known for its pagan worship

It was t/principal center of worship of t/Sumerian moon god.

A Ziggurat (a rectangular stepped tower) was devoted to this deity, it stood some 70 ft above t/desert.

29 And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.³⁰ And Sarai was barren; she had no child.

31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.

d. God called Abram out of Ur — they were headed to Canaan

Canaan = Land of Promise.

They went as far as t/area of Haran. Would have followed t/route of t/Euphrates River, thus avoiding t/Arabian Desert.

32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

e. This sets the stage for the events of chapter 12 . . .

2. Genesis 12:1–5

1 NOW the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you;

a. According to v. 4 – Abraham was 75 years old

2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;
3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

b. As for the rest of chapter 12, 13 & 14 . . .

(1) In 12:7 God appears to Abram

He gives this promise:

“To your descendants I will give this land.”

After building an altar there to t/Lord, he cont. on his journey.

He encounters a famine, so he goes down to Egypt.

While there, he lies about his wife fearing t/Egyptians, saying she was his sister.

(2) Chapter 13 -

(a) He then heads to the Negev (southland) with his wife and Lot

We read in vv. 7-12:

7 . . . there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. . . .

8 So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. “Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.”

10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.

11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot

settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

(b) Here we see God's sovereignty in the decisions of men

Lot chooses selfishly what appeared to be t/better land. That left Abraham w/the other option, t/Promised Land.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

[c] God is sovereign over our decisions

Don't be afraid to make decisions . . . Follow t/principles of G's W., follow wise counsel, then trust G. & He will lead you. Don't look back.

I think of our decision to move here from AZ over 22 yrs ago Back in 2002, had someone told me, "You will lose your daughter in NY due to a drunk driver" - do you think I would have moved? But in hindsight, in trusting a good G., I would not have it any other way — because this was His will

(3) In chapter 14 -

We see t/war of several Kings. Lot is taken captive. Abram rescues him. And then t/fascinating encounter w/this King named Melchizedek who blesses Abram, saying:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Melch., we learn later from t/BOH, is a type of X (Heb. 6-7).

3. Genesis 15:1–6

1 AFTER these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.” 2 And Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.”

At this pt. Abram is 75-80 y/o. He has a serv. – Eliezer (heir)

4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

This key v. which we see quoted in Rom. 4 & here in Gal.:

6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

G. “cuts a covenant” w/Abram, a unilateral, unconditional covt.

Some 20 years later that this promise is reiterated in ch. 17.

A. name is changed from Abram to Abraham.

Circm. is given as a sign of t/covt.

Sarai becomes Sarah “princess”

Isaac is named as t/child of promise.

4. Hebrews 11:8–10, 39

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.⁹ By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

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

Gal. 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

In a sense, it all starts in Gen. 15:6 ==>

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Echoed in Gal. 3:6 ==>

Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A. was 1st person called by God for a specific role in t/plan of redemption, one that would be fulfilled in JC.

Matthew's genealogy begins w/Abraham ==>

Matt. 1:1 THE book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham is the father of faith for all who believe

So much more we could say about A. This will have to do.

II. By way of Application (concluding thoughts)

A. Abraham did not deserved to be chosen by God

There was nothing in Abraham to commend him to God
- God's sov. grace. His unconditional choice of A.

1. Remember Romans 9

9:8–16 8 . . . it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.”

10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12 it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” 13 Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15 For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

2. It doesn’t depend on man’s will (which isn’t free) but God’s will (which is)

a. Grace isn't something we deserve or earn

That's why it's called "grace." God's prerogative to give it. That's what it says (vv. 15-16).

3. God's choice of Abraham was made from before the foundation of the world — in eternity

It wasn't based on anything in A. who was called out of abject paganism.

4. It's the same with we who believe and have Abraham as our father

Nothing w/i us that caused G. to chose us.

It isn't like God looked at you and said, "you are so great I just have to draft you onto my team."

"There is nothing in us to commend us to God. And yet God loves us. Just as He sought Abraham, He seeks to draw us into fellowship with Himself." [Boice, 17]

B. True faith demonstrates itself in action

Abraham acted out the reality of his faith.

1. The pinnacle of that was in offering his son Isaac

a. Genesis 22

G. tells Abraham to take his son, Isaac, & offer him as a burnt offering on Mt. Moriah. Isaac! T/promised heir!

A. goes, takes his son along w/2 attendants ==>

5 Abraham said to [them], "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and

return to you.” 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

Isaac asks him, “I see wood & fire; where’s the lamb?”

Abraham replies, “God will provide . . . the lamb . . .”

Abraham builds an altar, binds his son Isaac, and is ready to kill him . . .

THE angel of the LORD suddenly appears & tells him “Stop!”

Abraham looks up and what’s there? A ram who then becomes t/substitute. What a picture! (cf. Heb. 11:19).

14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide . . .

Abraham is the father of faith for all who believe

C. True faith doesn't have to be perfect to save

a. Abraham's faith stuttered from time to time

Listen to this summary of Abraham’s lapses in faith ==>

“One of his first failures was not fully obeying God's command to leave his relatives behind when entering the Promised Land. He also demonstrated a lack of faith in God's protection on multiple occasions. Twice, Abraham lied about his wife Sarah's identity, claiming she was his sister, out of fear for his life. These incidents, occurring in Egypt and later with Abimelech, not only showed a failure of faith but also endangered Sarah's well-being. Another significant

failure was Abraham's decision to father a child with another woman, Hagar, at his wife's suggestion, instead of trusting in God's promise of an heir. These lapses in faith led to various consequences, including expulsion from Egypt and bringing grief to those involved. . . . These failures highlight that even figures known for their faith can struggle with trust in God's love and protection.” [Logos, AI Summary]

“Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety. On the other hand, we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief.”

[Calvin, Institutes 3.2.17]

D. Justification by Faith Alone is at the Heart of the Gospel

1. Christian — learn to apply the gospel to your own heart

“As Christians we need to relearn the gospel every day. We are prone to wander, as the old hymn says, and hence we may act as if a spell has been cast over us. The Christian life is a battle to rely on the gospel, and even as Christians we are inclined to look to ourselves and trust in our own achievements rather than relying solely on the cross of Christ. In our counseling and our preaching and teaching we must summon people over and over to the cross of Christ

and call them to look away from themselves and focus on Christ. We may slowly drift from the gospel, just as the Galatians did. The problems Paul addressed in Galatia remind us all that the Christian life cannot be lived on autopilot, that there is a daily struggle to grasp the gospel. [Schreiner, 186–187]

Abraham is the father of faith for all who believe

Do you believe? We all have faith of some kind. Can't live w/o it. Even t/atheist has faith that G. doesn't exist & when he dies that's all there is.

John 11:25–26 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

{The Gospel . . . Invitation . . . }