

Galatians 9 – Father Abraham
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC 11-10-2024

If you grew up in church like I did, at some point in your life, probably in Sunday school or children's church, you sang a song called Father Abraham.

Father Abraham had many sons and many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you – so let's just praise the Lord.

It was a fun song for kids, but it taught an important truth about our identity as Christians – we are sons and daughters of Abraham. Now wait a minute! You might think. Jewish people are descendants of Abraham, not Christians. Well... if you think that you would be wrong - so Father Abraham is the subject I'm preaching on today.

We are in a sermon series on the book of Galatians called Freedom Through Christ. Paul confronted the Galatians for believing that Christ and the cross were not enough for salvation, but they also had to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. They believed that you start by faith but you finish by works.

But the Bible teaches that salvation begins and is brought to completion by grace through faith. So Paul now teaches the Galatians and us that salvation is by faith alone by quoting Old Testament Scriptures and using the example of Abraham.

Our text today is Galatians 3:6-13. Verses 6 and 7 say:

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

In verse 6 Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. We taught last week that It was faith and faith alone that caused God to account Abraham as righteous. It was not because of any good works that he had done. And it's the same for us: we are counted as righteous because of faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Verse 7 says that since Abraham was made righteous by faith not by works, he is the father of everyone who believes God for righteousness.

This was a strong rebuke to the Jewish Christians who tried to bring Gentile Christians under the law. These Jews believed they were superior to the Gentiles because they descended from Abraham and observed the law. **But Paul said that the most important link to Abraham was not the link of genetics and not the link of works, but it is the link of faith.**

This would have been shocking to the Judaizers because they believed that they

had right standing before God because they were physical descendants of Abraham. Jesus had to deal with this many times when speaking to Jewish leaders. He said to them in John 8:38-44

"I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." 39 "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are determined to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the things your own father does."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God Himself." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on My own; but He sent Me. 43 Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.

There is a big lie that people buy into that we are all God's children. This is not what the Bible teaches! Yes, in the sense that He created everything, God is the father of everyone. But the **Bible plainly teaches that not everyone is a child of God.**

Everyone is part of one of two families: God's or Satan's. All it requires to be part of Satan's family is to be born. But to be a part of God's family you must be born again! You must change kingdoms, change families, change fathers!

In Matthew 13 Jesus talked about good seed and bad seed. Verses 38-39 say:

...the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

Every human being was created by God but not everyone is a child of God. You became part of the human family by your first birth, but you become a member of God's family by your second birth. Colossians 1:13-14 says:

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

God wants a family, and He wants you to be a part of it.

The deception Paul addressed in Galatians 3:7 is the deception that Jews were children of God because they were children of Abraham. And that deception caused those who were preoccupied with keeping the law of Moses to view the church along ethnic lines.

The Judaizers were telling Gentile believers that they essentially had to become Jewish to be Christians. They said things like the non-Jewish believers must be circumcised and eat kosher food. If the Gentile believers did not do this, they were excluded from fellowship with the Jews because they did not follow the law.

The Judaizers believed that the blessing of God was on the people of God and they believed only the Jewish people were the people of God. So the non-Jews were deceived into thinking that they must become Jewish and follow the law of Moses to be in right relationship with God.

So – the book of Galatians was written by Paul to address law versus grace, but there is another underlying theme in Galatians addressing the ethnic division in the churches. The primary passage addressing this is Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Obviously, there are still Jews and Gentiles, men and women. But what Paul teaches here is that our main identity does not come from our ethnicity, our gender or our status in life. When we belong to Christ, we are all children of Abraham and heirs of God's promise to him. We are all part of the same family – whether Jew or Gentile.

In Christ color does not matter. In Christ gender does not matter. In Christ age does not matter. In Christ occupation does not matter. In Christ income does not matter. In Christ level of education does not matter. What matters is that we are in Christ.

We are the body of Christ. We are the family of God. And Abraham is the father of our faith. Romans 4:11-17 says:

Abraham is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

This means that non-Jews who are believers in Christ are part of God's family. It also means that Jewish people who do not believe in Christ are not part of God's family. They need faith in Christ, just like the rest of us. That's why Romans 9:6-8 says:

For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

It's the same today when people believe God accepts them because they come from a Christian family. God is a Father, not a grandfather; everyone must have their *own* faith in God. This was a great comfort to the Gentile Christians who were regarded as "second class Christians" by some Jewish believers. Now they knew that God considered them sons of Abraham.

Unfortunately, some Christians have taken this truth and misapplied it. There are two major ways that some Christians get into error concerning Israel and Jewish people. **One error is the error of replacement theology which says the church has replaced Israel in the eyes of God.** This theology says that God is no longer concerned with Israel or Jewish people. We know that can't be true because God made an everlasting covenant with them. Also, Romans 11:1-2 says

Has God cast away His people? Certainly not! ...God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

God is not finished with Israel and there will come a day when Israel will accept her Messiah and Romans says it will be like life from the dead.

The other error that some Christians get into regarding Israel is that Jewish people can be saved apart from Jesus Christ – that they are saved by being part of the Old Covenant. Not true!

In John 14:6, Jesus – speaking to Jewish people – said, ***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.***

There are not 2 plans of salvation – there is one. Jesus is the one and only way! Romans 10:12-13 says:

There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

All who put their faith in Jesus Christ are sons of Abraham. **Abraham has his *spiritual* sons and his *genetic* sons, but it is far more important to be a *spiritual* son of Abraham than a *genetic* son.** Galatians 3:8 says:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."

Paul said that the Scripture foresaw and preached. God foreknew that the Gentiles would be included in His covenant of grace, so he preached to Abraham way back in Genesis that his blessing of righteousness by faith was intended for Gentiles as well as Jews.

We don't know exactly when God preached the gospel to Abraham. Many believe that it was on Mt. Moriah when God provided the ram to be sacrificed in place of Abraham's son. That whole event is a prophetic message about the sacrifice of Jesus. We don't know when God preached to Abraham, but we do know it happened at some point because Jesus said in John 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.

Paul's intention was to show that God's plan all along was to include all people in the possibility of salvation by faith. Galatians 3:9 says"

So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Here Paul addressed those who thought that obeying the law would result in salvation and receive the blessing of Abraham. He said that those who have faith are actually the ones blessed along with Abraham. Paul was saying that if the father of our faith was accepted by God only because of his faith, then surely the good works of lesser mortals will not result in them being accepted by God. In fact, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 in verse 10:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Jews believed that living under under the Law of Moses was a pathway to blessing. But Paul boldly declared that instead of blessing, living under the works of the law put them under a curse.

Obviously, we are blessed when we obey God's word because there is an inherent, built-in blessing when we live the way God says we should live.

But God never intended the law to be the way we find approval with Him. He knew we could never keep the law and that's why He instituted the system of atoning sacrifice along with the law. Every blood sacrifice in the Old Testament looked forward to what Jesus would accomplish on the cross for us.

To prove his point Scripturally Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26. The Old Testament itself shows us that if we do not keep all things in the law and actually do them, then we are under a curse.

For God to approve you on the basis of the law, you first have to do it. Not simply *know* it, not simply *love* it, not simply *teach* it, not simply *want* it, you must do it.

Secondly, you have to do it all. Not some. Not just more good than bad.

James 2:10 says:

For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

Paul's point is heavy: if you want to be saved by your works, the only way you can stand approved before God by the law is to do it all. If you don't, you are cursed. Galatians 3:11 says:

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

Here Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4, another Old Testament verse that tells us that right standing before God comes by faith, not by the law. The Jews themselves knew that no one could keep the law perfectly. This is why they placed such emphasis on being children of Abraham, essentially trusting in Abraham's works to save them because their own works could not. Galatians 3:12 says:

The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, as the scripture says, "Whoever does everything the Law requires will live."

Some might say, "Look, I'll do the best I can under the law and let faith cover the rest. God will look at my effort and my good intentions and credit to me as righteousness. The important thing is that I am really trying." Not true! The quote from Leviticus 18:5 is clear. If you want to live by the law, you must *do* it all.

The effect of Paul's use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-12 overwhelming proves that trying to be saved by keeping the law results in a curse. That's the bad news; now Paul begins to explain the good news. Galatians 3:13 says:

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Because we cannot actually keep all the law, the law put us under a curse. But now Jesus **has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Redemption means “buying back” or “purchasing out of.”** It isn’t just rescuing; it is paying a price to rescue. Jesus bought us out from under the curse of the law. Simply put, in Jesus, we aren’t cursed anymore. Jesus bought us out of defeat, out of slavery, and out of a death sentence to reign as kings and priests with Him forever.

He accomplished this by standing in our place and taking on Himself the curse we deserved. Christ was not made a curse for Himself. He was made a curse ‘for us.’ Christ is personally innocent. He did not deserve to be killed for any crime of His own doing. And just like our sins became Christ’s sins – our curse became His curse.

When did Jesus pay this price? According to Deuteronomy 21:23 that would be when Jesus took our curse upon Himself as He hung on the cross. Why did Jesus do this? Galatians 3:14 says:

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Jesus received this curse, which we deserved and He did not, so that we could receive the *blessing of Abraham*, which He deserved and we did not. Jesus did far more than taking away the curse we deserved. He also gave us a blessing that we didn’t deserve.

Now I know that some people teach that the blessing of Abraham means to have wealth and power. I don’t have a problem with people being blessed financially. But the context here is the blessing of being justified before God by faith instead of works and the blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit. **That blessing is something far more precious than money or power – it’s the blessing of being right with God through faith.**

And notice that the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles. Paul didn’t mean that it *only* comes upon Gentiles, as if Jews were excluded, but that it comes also upon those Gentiles who are in Christ.

The blessing doesn’t come *because* they are Gentiles, any more than the blessing of being right with God comes to Jewish people because they are Jews. It comes to all, Jew and Gentile alike, who are identified in Christ Jesus and not by their own attempts to justify themselves.

I told you at the beginning of this sermon that God wants a family, and He wants you to be a part of it. How do we become a member of God’s family? Ephesians 2:17-18 says:

He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away

from Him, and peace to the Jews who were near. 18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

The invitation to be part of God's family is universal, but there is one condition: profession of faith in Jesus. Galatians 3:26 says:

For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become his children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our spiritual family.

Through faith we receive Abraham's blessing of salvation and the Holy Spirit.