

Text: Gal. 3:6-14

Title: Abraham's example: justification by faith alone is scriptural

Time: 4/7/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: A hypnotherapist will have some method for bringing a client out of his state of hypnosis. In one youtube example I found, the hypnotist told her client that she was going to count to five, and that with each passing number the client would become a bit more awake and a bit more "back-into-this-room."

The closest thing to hypnosis that we ever read about in our Bibles is what Paul says in the first part of this chapter. He compares what false teachers have done to the Galatian churches to being "bewitched" (v. 1). It is as though these false teachers had cast a spell of some kind on the Galatians that caused them to be hypnotized by the false gospel that would add our works to faith when it comes to how a sinner is justified before the holy law of God.

So Paul's work in this passage is somewhat like the work of a hypnotist trying to awaken a client from hypnosis. He does not count to five, nor in hushed tones tell the church members to slowly come back into the room. Instead, he deals with their bewitched state by pointing them to the Scripture, and specifically what the Scripture says about the way that Abraham became a righteous man before God's holy law.

*Justification* is having our legal condemnation before God's holy law removed from our account and replaced by the righteous standing of Christ.

Paul points to Abraham's example, because he wants the Galatian churches to understand that justification by faith alone is scriptural. He quotes Genesis 15 in verse 6, Genesis 12 in verse 8, Deuteronomy 27 in verse 10, Habakkuk 2 in verse 11, Leviticus 18 in verse 12, and Deuteronomy 21 in verse 13.

How shall we wake up from the bewitching error of the zeitgeist of our times? We can only do so as we allow the Scripture to become our focus. We wake up from the spell-binding influence of our world's falsehoods by answering the question, "What does the Bible say?"

You may ask, "Why is the Scripture the key to waking up in this way?" Indirectly, verse 8 gives us the clear answer. There Paul says that the Scripture saw that God justifies Gentiles by faith and preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham. But there was no Scripture in Abraham's day. Moses was the first to author Scripture generations later.

What Paul is assuming when he says that Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham is that the words of God can be called the words of Scripture and the words of Scripture can be called the words of God. Scripture is the key to waking up because it is the written words of God.

So the question for us this morning is, "Will we use Scripture to correct the error that bewitches our hearts and the hearts of people around us?"

I have heard it argued recently by well-meaning people that you should only use the Bible to help people who say they believe the Bible, and that you should use natural law and reason to help others. But that can only be true if the God of the Bible really does not exist and the Bible is not really His

word. To concede that we cannot use the Bible to correct atheistic error is to presuppose atheistic error before the conversation even starts. If He exists, of course we should start with His word because of who He is.

Paul's practice was always – "What does the Bible say?" We will have the answers we need only to the degree we find our answer to that question about the matter.

Here Paul focuses especially on what Scripture explains about how a sinful man can be justified, made righteous, before God's holy law. Notice with me four answers Scripture gives in this regard.

I. Scripture explains how Abraham became justified before God's law by faith (vv. 6-7).

Illustration: My mom was the first one saved in the home I grew up in. Her uncle had taken her to a Baptist camp in Wisconsin when she was a young girl and Mom trusted Christ as Savior at that camp. She came home to a Lutheran home and did not grow much in the Lord.

My dad and she were married, and God saved my dad later during a sales call he entertained at home from a life insurance agent. Evidently, the life-insurance conversation turned into an eternal-life-insurance conversation, and Dad trusted Christ.

Application: I am thankful that I have had a Christian mom and dad. But the Bible nowhere teaches that because I am a son of Jack and Carolyn Hobi, I am therefore justified before God's holy law. But it turns out that in order to be justified, we do have to be someone's son.

What the Bible teaches in texts like the one before us this morning is that for a person to be justified before God's holy law, that person must be a son of Abraham. The reason this is true is that the Abrahamic Covenant promised that in his Descendant or Son, all the families of the earth would be blessed (v. 9; Gen. 22:18, (to Isaac) 26:4, (to Jacob) 28:14).

So just like Jesus gives the justified His righteousness as the One righteous before God's law, so also as the son of Abraham, Jesus gives the justified His sonship.

One of the great ironies of this truth for Abraham personally is the fact that he too needed this blessing. We might say that in this sense, Abraham needed to become a son of Abraham.

How did that happen in Abraham's life? Verse 7 tells us – he believed God's promise of salvation by faith, and God counted it to him for righteousness. That is how everyone must become a son of Abraham. He must do so by faith in God's promise to save me as an unworthy sinner. Only those of this faith are the sons of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Scripture explains that Abraham was justified by faith, because you and I need the same justification he did.

II. Scripture explains how Gentiles must be justified before God's law by faith (vv. 8-9).

Illustration: As mere mortals you and I often must have a plan B. We need plan B because our plan A does not work very well.

During the winter season, plan A is to have our normal worship service at 11 am on a Sunday morning. Often, we

have to go to plan B because the weather is not allowing us to meet according to our regular schedule.

Application: God is not a mere mortal, and He never has to go to a plan B. He does not even have one. His plan A for justifying a sinner has always been in place, and it has always worked.

Paul here says that Gentiles have always been saved by faith (the Ninevites of Jonah's day did not keep the law very well – nor did Jonah for that matter), and that the same gospel Paul preached in the regions of Galatia was preached beforehand to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham did not have all the details we have today, but what he had was the same saving gospel, whose promise to save through a descendant of Abraham apart from the works of the law had to be believed for justification.

Today, we Gentiles know more of this singular plan of justification of sinners than even Abraham did. Are we believers? Have we trusted His promise to save us from God's curse and give us God's blessing instead?

III. Scripture explains why no man can be justified before God's law by works (vv. 10-12).

Illustration: I saw a news report this past week, about a man who was standing trial in Dupage, IL for leading police on a 100 mph car chase. The jury was just about to render its guilty verdict when the man went running out of the courthouse, and as of the report I saw, he is still running.

Application: Paul tells us that no man, woman, or child can run from God's courthouse or escape His guilty verdict. This is certainly true because God is God, not man, but it is also true for two other very important reasons.

1. Doing the works of the law is not possible for sinful people (v. 10).

Two commandments sum up the requirements of the law and the prophets, and you and I break both of those each and every day of our lives – love the Lord your God with all your being, and love your neighbor as yourself. Do it in every way possible and at all times without exception. Only Jesus did this.

2. Doing the works of the law is not God’s plan for justification (vv. 11-12).

Salvation is God’s work, not ours, and it must be done according to His plan, not our own. Saul of Tarsus took a back seat to no one when it came to whatever righteousness is achievable through God’s law (Phil. 3:4-6). But he did not become just or righteous until he became a believer on the road to Damascus (Phil. 3:7-9).

Illustration: Do you remember the conversation Jesus had with the rich young ruler? The rich young ruler thought that he had followed God’s law, but then Jesus said, “Sell all you have and give it to the poor and follow me,” and the man went away ashamed and sorrowing, because he had many riches.

Who ever sold everything they had in order to give it to the poor? Only One – Jesus Christ, “who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might obtain eternal riches.”

Christ is God’s plan, and He is the reason Scripture gives for why no man can be justified by his own works, which brings us to our last point.

IV. Scripture explains why no man can be justified before God's law without Christ (vv. 13-14).

Application: We have contemplated the blessing that the Abrahamic Covenant brings to Abraham and the sons of Abraham by faith. There was One to whom the Abrahamic Covenant brought God's curse. He did not run out of the courtroom right before the guilty verdict. He ran in. He did so to redeem us from the curse of the law - to pay the price of punishment God's holy law demands from the sinner.

Conclusion: Did you hear why He did that? ". . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Will you receive that promise of salvation through faith? Or will you cling to your efforts to prove your worthiness before God's holy law?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*