

Abraham and the Gospel

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” - Galatians 3:8.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian churches shortly after founding them. In less than ten years these churches began to waver in faith and Paul warned them about it. Their new-found desire to serve both the law and Christ, Paul seriously questioned, *“This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”* (Galatians 3:2). He contends that they know better than to depart from their first love to follow another teaching promising a more complete way, *“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* (Galatians 3:3).

Paul first confronted this false teaching, which now troubled the Galatians, in Antioch at the end of his first missionary trip. This teaching appeared to be scriptural, expressing that one must not only believe in Jesus but must also adhere to the Mosaic Law, *“...Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1). Specifically, this false understanding taught that Christians were duty-bound both *“...to keep the law of Moses”* (Acts 15:5) and to maintain faith in the power of the blood. Because this teaching came from within the Jewish faith many listeners accepted it without ever questioning it.

Paul tried to quell this erroneous thinking by stating *“...that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith”* (Galatians 3:11). Faith is not something we convince ourselves of concerning God’s grace but it is as Peter says, *“...through his name [Jesus] whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43). Hence, faith is directly tied to the forgiveness of sins. Paul later wrote, *“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 13:38). God grants the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who can gladly receive the proclamation of this gospel message of forgiveness—for without the Spirit none are saved, *“...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Romans 8:9).

Our subject text states that the gospel, the same message of forgiveness preached by the apostles, was preached by Abraham—well before there was a written law. The law did not exist until God gave it to Moses on

Mt. Sinai some 430 years after Abraham was called out of Haran *“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after; cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect”* (Galatians 3:17). Thus, Abraham was saved through faith in the to-be-completed work of Jesus without ever knowing that there was to be a law, *“For if Abraham were justified by works [the law], he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”* (Romans 4:2-3).

We might conclude from the forgoing that faith renders the law invalid. However, in his epistle to the Romans, Paul asserted otherwise, *“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law”* (Romans 3:31). So the law has its place, but not in salvation—*“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster”* (Galatians 3:24-25). Although the law judges our life through the word, we are not to use the law to improve our standing with God or to use it to direct our neighbor, *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”* (Colossians 2:16). Jesus only asks that *“...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47). Believers are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit; *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16). Therefore, *“...we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully”* (1 Timothy 1:8).

Like the Galatians, each of us is prone to wander from the gospel. We tend to waver, like a reed shaken with the wind, when some good-sounding doctrine is presented to us; especially when it is based on the Bible. To avoid the spiritual pitfall experienced by the Galatians we are to try all spirits, regardless of who they may be, to determine whether they are of God or whether they are merely presenting thoughts that appeal to our emotional intellect, *“...believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1).

For the Galatians, who probably wanted to submit to the law out of a sincere wish to please God, trouble came when they conflated Mosaic Law with faith.

God’s Peace, Charles Korhonen

Jan 6	Ken Storm	Holy Communion 11am
Jan 13	Nathan Ruonavaara	
Jan 20	Ken Storm	
Jan 27	Chad Kuivanen	Potluck Meal

Sunday School/Adult Bible Studay 10am
Church at 11:00am
Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

Church Cleaning Curtis and Karen Lampinen

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