

What is Faith?

- Before we deal with this difficult passage of Scripture we first must remind ourselves about the definition of faith.
- Hebrews 11:1—standard definition of faith.
- We must always remember that God is a dispensationalist. He told different people different things during different times. Therefore, faith is believing what God said to you.
- Hebrews 11:7
- Matthew 19:16-22—Christ told the rich young ruler two things were necessary if he wanted to inherit eternal life: 1) keep the commandments, 2) sell all that he had.
- How would the rich young ruler demonstrate his faith in what Christ told him? He would have kept the commandments and sold his possessions.
- We already know from our studies in the book of Galatians that today we are not required to keep the commandments in order to be justified. Faith in God believes the specific revelation that God has given to you.
- This morning we are going to be looking at some interesting passages concerning the justification of Abraham and we need to keep this important definition in mind as we do so.

Galatians 3:6

- *“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*
- In verses 1-5, Paul asks the Galatians a series of questions in order to make a point about how they were justified. In verses 6-9, Paul begins a discussion about Abraham in order to illustrate his point.
- When Paul is talking here in Galatians 3 about men being justified by faith he is not talking about a new principle but an extremely old one.
- Genesis 15:6—is verse Paul is quoting in Gal. 3:6
- Romans 4:2-5—when Abraham believed God in Genesis 15 was he justified based upon his own works or by simply believing God.

- So faith for Abraham in Genesis 15 did what God said. But God didn't tell Abraham to do anything except believe. Is this not the same way we get justified today? Yes

Galatians 3:7

- *“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”*
- Paul makes a clear statement in this verse that those who are of faith are the Children of Abraham.
- Does this verse mean that we are spiritual Israel as much of professing Christendom believes? No. Nowhere does Paul teach that the Body of Christ replaced Israel.
- Paul's point is that we are Abraham's spiritual children because we to have exercised faith in what God's word to us. We cannot be the physical children of Abraham because that distinction is reserved for his physical decedents that nation of Israel.

Galatians 3:8

- *“And the scripture, foreseeing”*
- This is by far the hardest verse in this passage of Scripture.
- Does God possess the ability to foresee the future? Yes, it called foreknowledge and it is one of his attributes. This verse says that the Scripture also possess the same ability.
- This verse is an absolute impossibility. Moses wrote the book of Genesis 500 years after the death of Abraham. The only to comprehend this verse is to believe what the Bible teaches about God's design in inspiration to make the living and the written word equal.
- God attributes his own attributes to his word. So if one believes that there are errors or faults with the Word of God what are they saying about God by default?
- *“that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”*
- Let us talk about what the verse does not say:
 - It does not say that the Scripture foretold that God would justify the Gentiles through faith. The word is foreseeing not foretelling.
 - It does not say that God told Abraham that we would justify the Gentiles through faith.

- It does not say that God preached to Abraham the good news that he was justified by faith. It was not until 5 centuries later that God moved Moses to write the book of Genesis.
- It does not mean that God preached to Abraham the Gospel of the Grace of God.
- So then what does it mean? Did God know that eventually he was going to justify the gentiles (uncircumcision) by faith alone? Yes. So then God justified Abraham in a special way so that he could be our spiritual father and we his spiritual children even though we are not his physical seed.
- Genesis 16:6--when faith alone was counted to Abraham as righteousness in Genesis 15 was he in circumcision or uncircumcised?
- Romans 4:9-12—Abraham was not circumcised until Genesis 17 after faith alone had been counted to him as righteousness. The entire chapter of Romans 4 is proving the fact that Abraham was not justified by works when God counted his faith for righteousness.
- So what should we do with James 2:21-26? Should we throw this “epistle of straw” out of Bible like Martin Luther suggested?
- James 2:21-22—clearly teaches that faith alone was not enough to justify Abraham when he offered Isaac upon the altar. When did this occur?
- Genesis 22:1-3—in this case if Abraham believed God what would he have done? Taken Isaac to the top of the mountain and killed him.
- In this case works were required of Abraham to demonstrate that he had faith. In Genesis 22 was Abraham in circumcision or uncircumcision? James 2 is clearly speaking about a different justification than Paul talks about in Romans 4.
- *“justify the heathen through faith”*
- We as gentiles are justified through faith. That is faith is the exclusive channel through which our justification comes.
- Romans 3:28-30—here we see a clear statement about the difference between how the circumcision and uncircumcision are justified. This passage is the difference between Romans 4 and James 2.
- Galatians 3:8—God justified Abraham in a special way in Genesis 15 because he foresaw how he would justify the Body of Christ. It is because of this dual justification of Abraham that we are able to be the spiritual children of Abraham.

- *“In thee shall all nations be blessed.”*
- Notice that because God foresaw how He would justify the gentiles he justified Abraham in the same way thereby allowing for all nations to still be blessed through Abraham.

Galatians 3:9

- *“So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”*
- Because we are of faith, we receive the spiritual blessings of Abraham, justification and eternal life.