



December 29, 2024

“Faith Buys...”

A Blessed New Year!

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

No Wednesday Night Classes on the First. Leadership Meeting Thursday, Jan 2.
Potluck next Sunday. Annual Church Meeting January 19, after the Service.

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GALATIANS 3:1–7 ~

V5 “So then” is our first transition...

V6 “Just as” is our second transition...

Paul’s point of comparison was justification before God.

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” The point was that the Galatians had likewise “believed God,” and it was likewise credited to them as righteousness.

Notice that it was not actual righteousness.

What precisely was it that God “credited” as though it were actual righteousness?

It would seem that it is believing with faith that is credited as though it were actual righteousness... But is that right?

What does faith buy?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Biblical Faith, my friends, is a belief in God that trusts Him... It is faith in Him.

Jeremiah 29:11–14a & Hebrews 11:5&6 ~

It is all about believing enough that you seek Him sincerely... as God. That faith opens you up to relationship with God.

Our faith isn't for His benefit; it is for our benefit.

Our faith, given to us by God, is the vehicle that we can drive on our journey towards God.

Our faith isn't some commodity, or product, or service, or currency, that God wants, or needs, or values.

He's not trying to engage in a business transaction with us where we trade some of our faith for a bit of His righteousness.

Our faith gives us the ability to enter in to the relationship that God has already orchestrated for us through Christ.

Faith begets faith as it is tested because God is ever faithful.

Can you see that it is your current relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that testifies to your justified status with God forever?

(Romans 4:3–5) Abraham believed that God would justify him, an ungodly man (John 8:56).

V7 "Therefore" is our third transition...

The sign of the Old Covenant was circumcision. The sign of the New Covenant is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

We are moving forward in Galatians, but to do that I need to reread the first five verses of chapter 3 together with verses 6 and 7. As I do, I will point out three transitions that are important...

Galatians 3:1–7, 1You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

The “So then” is our first transition... indicating a logical conclusion of the previous 4 verses formed as a rhetorical question. Because of what Paul wrote in verses 1 through 4, it should be painfully obvious that “He who provides you with the Holy Spirit and works miracles among you,” does so on the basis of hearing the Gospel with faith in its Author, and not on the basis of works of the Law, which none of them had done to that point.

6Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. 7Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

The “Just as” to open verse 6, is our second transition and it is a big one. It is a single word in Greek that creates a hinge that ties the first 5 verses together with the next 24 verses.

Some Bibles put verse 6 as the ending verse of a paragraph with the first five verses, and others have it as the first verse in the next paragraph... It is both and neither... Verse 6, but perhaps even better, just the transitional word translated, “Just as,” to open verse 6, could stand alone as the pivot point between the two paragraphs.

Some people dismiss the significance of it because they can't see how the giving of the Holy Spirit in verse 5 can possibly apply to Abraham. Clearly, the giving of the Holy Spirit is a feature of Christ's victory and was not available in the same way previously. In other words, Abraham was part of the age of promise, before the personal indwelling Holy Spirit was available,

whereas Christians, like the Galatians, are part of the age of fulfilment where the Day of Pentecost is past.

People that point that out are looking at the wrong connection. Paul wasn't saying that the Galatians had received the Holy Spirit just like Abraham, his point of comparison is justification before God, not the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit and God's working of miracles among the Galatians was the proof that God had accepted them as His very Own... They were righteous in His eyes – they were Justified before Him. Just as God had accepted Abraham as His very Own 2,000 years earlier – Justifying him as righteous.

Regardless of the specific proof in the two cases, the acceptance was obvious and for both it was based on faith, not on legalistic works. That's the connection.

Paul wrote, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." His point was that the Galatians had likewise "believed God," and it was credited to them as righteousness as well.

Notice that in both cases it was not actual righteousness. See what I mean? If either Abraham or the Galatians had had their own actual righteousness God wouldn't credit it to them "as righteousness," it would just be righteousness. God would just acknowledge their righteousness, not credit righteousness to their account.

Here's an analogy... If you make a normal payment on your home loan, the mortgage company doesn't credit it to your account "as though" it were money – it is money. They simply acknowledge your payment.

If, on the other hand, you gave them 3 chickens, 5 fainting goats, 3 milk cows and a partridge in a pear tree, and they were willing to accept all of that in lieu of money as acceptable payment for the amount that you owe, then they would credit that menagerie to your account "as though" it was money.

In that case, the creatures are what is credited as though they were money. You could also say that the act of you giving over those creatures is what was actually credited... don't worry, more on that later.

What precisely was it that God “credited” as though it were actual righteousness? “Abraham believed God,” it plainly says, and the Galatians received the Holy Spirit “by hearing with faith.”

So, it would seem logical to conclude that it is believing with faith that is credited as though it were actual righteousness. In other words, it appears, as many think, that faith itself is equivalent to righteousness. Put crudely, that would mean that a person can buy righteousness with the currency of faith. Our human faith buys God’s righteousness. It is exchanged for Justification.

Now, if that seems a bit off to you, I’m gratified that you realize that. Paul will make this point more clearly later in the Letter, but I don’t want us to potentially hold an erroneous idea that long. Just to keep us on the same sheet of music I’ll explain, but then we’ll go back to flowing with Paul’s argument. Abraham’s belief in God was a trusting of God by faith.

Let’s look at Abraham. The faith that he had was not his own – it was given to him by God, right? Beyond that, whatever you think that Abraham brought to the table, his faith, or sense of duty, or stoic obedience, we

need to acknowledge that God created Abraham. God gave him his base personality and intellect at conception. God orchestrated the experiences of his life, so even if you're not sure how much faith God imparted to him, the bottom line is God made Abraham who he was – it's all God, my friends. As ever, it is always all God, all the time.

Now, here's where we go beyond all of that to this nuanced point that I've been hinting at... What does faith buy? The obvious answer would be that faith, however it is acquired, buys righteous standing before God. That's the part that's wrong. You can see that in this famous quote. Faith is not a commodity, a product, a service, or a form of currency... Faith is not a thing in and of itself.

Biblical Faith, my friends, is a belief in God that trusts Him... It is faith in Him. If we want to say that faith can buy anything, the thing that it can buy is relationship with God, never righteousness before God. It is ultimately relationship that God accepts as righteousness... It's just that relationship with God is only possible through faith.

The prophet Jeremiah alluded to Deuteronomy and the Psalms in chapter 29 of his Book where God declares that He has plans for Israel after their exile in Babylon.

Those specific plans for the Jews then, taken in general, are the same general plans that God has for all His children, at all times, and so, they apply to us now. Jeremiah 29:11–14a, 11For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. 12Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 14aI will let Myself be found by you,’ declares the Lord.”

What enables a person to search for God with all their heart? In a word, faith. You must believe in order to call, pray, seek, and search. What is the result of such faith-driven seeking? “I will let Myself be found by you.” Relationship established.

That’s what Hebrews 11:5&6, means in talking about faith... 5By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for before he was taken up, he was

attested to have been pleasing to God. 6And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.” Enoch wasn’t taken up to Heaven because of his faith, his faith was the relational aspect that made him “pleasing to God.” Enoch’s faith is what enabled him to live his life as God’s friend – to walk with God while he was on earth which pleased God so much that God had him continue to walk with Him in Heaven.

Faith that God exists and that He wants to have a personal relationship with you precedes seeking Him and ultimately results in being with Him. Let me say that again, faith that God exists and that He wants to have a personal relationship with you precedes your seeking of Him – it comes before that and produces that. That same faith grown up a bit ultimately results in being with God relationally.

It is all about believing enough that you seek Him sincerely... as God. That faith opens you up to relationship with God. God is already there... He’s waiting... Our faith isn’t for His benefit; it is for our benefit. He doesn’t need any faith, nor does He require your faith to meet some standard. You need enough

faith to seek Him for Who He is... Your faith is for you, not Him.

Do we imagine that God takes our human faith and runs it through His faith justification converter at His righteousness factory and then waits until the resultant output is adequate? Like there's a minimum acceptable measure of faith, that once converted, it hits the cutoff point and you're in? Maybe we put in a sufficient amount of faith in both quality and quantity to produce enough righteousness points to grant us Justification?

Perhaps we imagine that it is our faith that enables us to do enough good things and avoid enough bad things that God credits our faith-driven behavior as that which is righteous?

Here's my favorite... This is an actual quote from a Mormon official summarizing their completely erroneous doctrine. The idea that faith is given to us as we clean ourselves up. That is a common, but completely antichristian idea.

I said that faith buys relationship and if we go along with that for a moment... What we find is that a tiny bit of faith, acted upon, is all that is required to seek God.

That initial sincere search will result in a faithful God allowing Himself to be found.

That is relationship right there and perhaps not yet Salvific, but through that faith-based reach, the faithfulness of God to be found is realized and experienced, thus growing that person's faith. Now we enter into a cycle of God's faithfulness growing our faith until we know Him and His Gospel well enough to grasp the concept of His justification of us by our faith to accept Him and His plan of Salvation in Christ. Can you see that the entire thing is relational?

Our faith, given to us by God, is the vehicle that we can drive on our journey towards God. It is the bridge that spans the gap on our side of the relationship, not on, or for, His side. See what I mean? Our faith isn't some commodity, or product, or service, or currency, that God wants, or needs, or values.

He's not trying to engage in a business transaction with us where we trade some of our faith for a bit of His righteousness. God is not buying our faith with the currency of forgiveness, and mercy, or justification and righteousness.

God's not buying anything from us... We are paving our path to Him with faith. If we insist on the currency idea, we are using our faith to buy from ourselves the ability to accept God as He is... He has revealed Himself to us through His Holy Word made flesh and now through His Holy Word made in writing.

We must believe that that is true. We must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. We must believe that He wants to be found by us and that if we take that leap of faith into His outstretched arms that He will catch us.

Our faith gives us the ability to enter in to the relationship that God has already orchestrated for us through Christ. Faith is not righteousness – it is faith and what faith does is it enables us to seek a proper kind of relationship with God. It opens us up to Him, and this is precisely what He is waiting for from you and me. That we would have enough faith to realize that He is right beside us and has already provided everything for an eternity of right-relationship with Him.

Of course, in entering in to that relationship we adapt to His revelation to us about Him and relationship with Him which includes the manner in which we are forever

Justified as righteous... The relational acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as the One and Only means of our Salvation and so, our right-relationship with God.

It is faith that enables us to do that from our side of the equation and that is why we can simplify the whole thing and simply say that faith is credited by God as though it was righteousness.

Faith begets faith as it is tested because God is ever faithful. Our trust in Him and His Salvation grows because we are experiencing relationship with Him right now. Can you see that it is your current relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that testifies to your justified status with God forever?

Faith enables relationship and relationship is the proof of righteousness and so it can be said that we are righteous, right before God and in right relationship with God by faith. Now, if you have such a relationship with God now, why would an insignificant thing like physical death interfere with it?

Conversely, if you have no desire for God. If you pretend that God does not exist, and you abhor the

idea of someone looking over your shoulder and then judging you when you die... Why in the world would you think that your physical death will change any of that? Indeed, if you want nothing to do with God now, why would you want to spend eternity in His presence?

God simply grants people what they have desired in this life for all of eternity. As demonstrated by your life you either deeply desire God to be your God, or you deeply desire to be your own god. It is the Original Sin.

So, what have we learned? The Galatian Christians, and likewise, all Christians since, including we Alêtheians, have been accepted by God because we heard God with faith enough to believe Him and to then trust Him fully with our Salvation, "Just as," in the same exact way that, Father Abraham did.

Abraham believed God's Message and through that belief and trust in God, God showed Himself faithful. Abraham's faith enabled him to enter in to the relationship that God desired and as such God declared Abraham right and just before Him.

This is exactly what Paul made more explicit in talking about Abraham in Romans 4:3–5, 3"For what does the

Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 4Now to the one who works, the wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Abraham believed that God would justify him, an ungodly man. See it there? Abraham could not enter into right-relationship with God if he was encumbered by all his sin guilt. Abraham was a mess! He wasn't stupid – he knew that. He still had several dumb mistakes recorded in the Bible ahead of him at this point. But Abraham, unlike those who didn't care to walk with God, unlike those who tried to appease God with sacrifices, and unlike those who sought their own righteousness, Abraham, trusted God to wipe away his sins and justify him.

He believed God. That's the difference. Abraham believed that God accepted Him and so Abraham accepted his place in God's family, trusting that God would take care of his debt Himself, somehow, someday. How do I know that for sure? Because Jesus said it in John 8:56, “Your father Abraham was

overjoyed that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced.”

Abraham is Saved exactly the same way that you and I are Saved... Only by the Blood of Jesus. Abraham had to wait to see the arrival of the Messiah, but he always knew that God would take away his sin... He knew that by faith and that faith enabled him to be God’s friend as God made Abraham righteous in His sight.

Verse 7 starts with our third transition, and it calls for a conclusion again. Because of everything that we have been talking about, “Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.”

The Judaizers had convinced the Galatians that in order to be God’s children they needed to become children of the covenant of circumcision as essentially adopted children of Abraham.

Paul corrected that erroneous assumption by pointing out that Abraham was the father of faith because he was the recipient of God’s promise long before there was a covenant requiring Abraham to do anything other than believe in God.

The argument that Paul avoids here is that Abraham was circumcised under the covenant long after he was declared righteous by God. The reason Paul skipped that bit here is that the Galatians could acknowledge that Abraham was justified by God by trusting in Him and then afterward, as a sign of that relationship, he obeyed God and was circumcised. They could logically conclude from that sequence that they were also justified by believing in God's Grace through Christ, but that now they should confirm that relationship by obeying God's command to be physically circumcised.

It seems fairly reasonable. It wasn't and it still isn't, but it would have required opening a whole other kettle of fish that Paul didn't want to open in this situation. That very thing shows us that we tailor our preaching to our audience. When you share Christ, share what helps by taking what your listener needs to hear into account.

The sign of the Old Covenant for the blood children of Abraham, as reckoned through Isaac and Jacob, was circumcision. The sign of the New Covenant for all children is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Under the Old it was ultimately a trust in God to one day send His Messiah to enable a Spiritual relationship. Under the

New, it is a Spiritual relationship and so, the sign, is the Spirit.

Paul's point was that the Galatians were Justified by God because they trusted God to forgive their sins and make them His Own kids, just as he had done for Abraham. The difference between the two was that the Galatians had the proof of the Spirit and of miracles worked among them. Abraham had the proof of circumcision. Theirs and so, ours, is a proof of fulfillment, Abraham's and so, all prior to Jesus, was a proof of promise.

Over the month of December, we have hopefully gotten a much better understanding of Justification, or Righteousness, and of Atonement. Hopefully, today, to close out the year, we gained a deeper insight into faith. And hopefully, next year, 2025, yes 2025, will be a year of continued growth for each of us in our faith relationship with God as well as for our church and the other churches preaching Christ in our valley.

My prayer is that revival sweeps our nation extending to all the nations of the earth... My prayer is that Jesus returns in 2025 and sets all things right.