

## ***PARTNERS WITH ABRAHAM***

### ***GALATIANS 3:6-9***

How do men find acceptance before God? It is solely by faith! Already Paul has appealed to the experience of the Christian as confirming this. None of the blessings of God have ever come to a soul because the person observed the law. They have always come when the person trusts Christ alone for salvation.

The experience of Abraham confirms this. We know more about the experience of Abraham than almost any Old Testament character. No name was more respected among the Jewish people of that day. Having been stripped of almost everything by the nations, they could still proudly announce, "But we are the children of Abraham." Being able to trace their lineage back to this spiritual giant gave them a basis for hope. They really believed that this physical relationship brought to them the blessings that God promised to him. Even today we find people trying to prove that they have a relationship physically with this great name of the past. Some have erroneously contended that the white anglo-saxon race is the ten lost tribes of Israel. They feel that this brings special blessings to the white anglo-saxon. So this raises the question about who the real descendants of Abraham are. It is the contention of Paul that the true descendants of the great Abraham are those who share his faith in God. The one thing that truly marked his life was his trust in God, so the thing that will mark the children of Abraham is their trust in God alone.

In translating verse nine, Dr. Williams gives us the interesting and helpful translation that brings out the force of the preposition. He translates, "So the men of faith are blessed as partners with trusting Abraham." Let us consider this possibility this morning. You and I can be the true participating partners with this Old Testament giant, this friend of God.

### ***I. THE CHRISTIAN IS HIS PARTNER IN FAITH.***

On what basis did God bless Abraham? This is the primary question Foul raises about this great man. Did God bless him because he had been circumcised? Actually a careful study of the record in Genesis will reveal that circumcision was given as a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, and the sign was given rather late in the life of Abraham. It was after God had already declared in Genesis fifteen and verse six, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." So the blessings that God conferred upon this man were not based upon his observance of some rule or his bearing in his physical body some evidence of the covenant. The blessing came a good while before.

Was it based upon some moral achievement of the man? While anyone must admit that Abraham was a good man, no one would dare label him as morally perfect after reading the book of Genesis. He was capable of and guilty of some

rather serious moral compromises. So whatever blessing that came to his life was not the reward for moral achievement.

The one inspired insight into his life that we have available to us is this one cited by the Apostle. "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The first evidence of trust in God in the life of Abraham came in the Ur of the Chaldees. When God revealed himself to Abraham, and called on him to leave his home, and go out to a land he had never seen, Abraham obeyed. He acted upon the revelation of God in a positive way. He did the only thing that he was capable of doing at that point in time, he responded to God in obedient trust, Then in this context God has just given him another promise, another word. This word reveals that in spite of the problems associated with his age and that of his wife, God will indeed give him an heir in his family. A son will be born into their family at God's appointed time. By all human standards this thing was incredible. It was unbelievable. But Abraham believed God! When he put his faith in God, God accepted his faith, and counted him as righteous.

The Judaizers that had come to Galatia were offering the blessings that God gave to Abraham on a different basis. They were telling the Gentile Christians that special favor would come to them if they would be circumcised and live by the rules of the Mosaic law. They were calling on them to identify with the physical descendants of Abraham in this outward and physical kind of way. But as Paul indicates on the basis of the Biblical record, this would be absurd. These were not the things that brought the blessings of God to Abraham. God did not grant to him righteousness because he was circumcised and lived by the Mosaic law. God granted such a gift solely on the basis of the fact that he was a believer. So Paul applies this principle so clearly, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." The participants with Abraham in the blessings of God are those who share his trust in the God of grace and covenant.

What is the thing that characterizes your relationship with God? It should be your faith in God. Unless it is your faith in Him, then you do not have a saving relationship with Him. You are not the partner of Abraham unless you are a person of faith.

## ***II. THE CHRISTIAN IS HIS PARTNER IN PRIVILEGE.***

What was the greatest privilege granted to this friend of God? In the mind of the Apostle there was no doubt concerning this. The greatest, thing that a man could ever receive was "righteousness." This the Scriptures declared was granted to him when he put his trust in the promise of the Lord God. God reckoned to him righteousness. "Accounted" is a key word here. The word is an accounting word. It means to reckon or count something, God entered on the heavenly ledger of Abraham "righteousness" even though he had no personal righteousness. God did

this as an expression of His generosity simply on the basis of the trust that He found in the heart of Abraham.

What are we to understand by "righteousness" in this verse? It is not an easy term to define and illustrate. Basically it is that which God will judge to "be right", it is that which will stand the test of the divine judgment. God granted to Abraham then that which made him acceptable before God, and that which assured him of approval when he stands before God in judgment. God granted it to him, entered this on his heavenly account when Abraham trusted in Him and that promise he had given.

Paul sees in this the whole Gospel. "And the scripture, foreseeing --- the Apostle surely has a high view of Scripture. They are credited with doing what only God can do---that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." Did you notice the usage of the word "justify"? The word means to declare to be righteous. So according to the Apostle the great blessing that God was to bestow upon the Gentiles through Abraham was this great blessing of righteousness, justification. What Abraham was allowed to see in a shadowy form was that from, His descendants there would come One who would bear the sins of the world. This Seed of Abraham would provide a just basis on which God would be able to declare righteous any sinners from any nation who came to Him in faith. This was really what Abraham himself responded to in faith. He was believing in the God who would bring about the redemption of the world.

Why is this righteousness so important? It is important because it meets man's greatest need. As the finite creature who has an accountability to the Creator, I need a righteousness that will assure me of acceptance and approval before the Judge of the universe. I find myself totally unable to provide this righteousness by my own effort. Every attempt I make in this direction only brings about inner frustration and despair. So to receive this blessing that God granted to Abraham as a gift is a most blessed privilege.

But the life of Abraham provides us another insight into why this righteousness is so important. The relationship that followed between Abraham and God was based upon this righteousness. The relationship was such that Abraham became known as the friend of God.- God consulted with Abraham on some very important matters. God listened when Abraham prayed. God blessed the ways of Abraham abundantly. The basis on which God blessed Abraham was that he was a righteous man. But this righteousness that made it possible for God to so relate to Abraham was the very righteousness that God had given to him as a gift. Are you looking for the special something that might give you a favored position before God, a special relationship with God? Attempts to establish such a

relationship on the basis of sacrifice and works are quite common. This was exactly what the Judaizers were advocating. But the experience of Abraham points in another direction. It reminds us that the blessings of God, the privileges enjoyed by Abraham were all received by faith.

This truth cannot be emphasized too much. Dr. Barnhouse tells of trying to help a struggling soul. He seemed to just be locked in spiritual darkness. The mind of the man just could not comprehend that salvation was the gift of God freely given. Finally in desperation the man just cried out, "But sir, what does God want? Tell me, what does God want?" Dr. Barnhouse said the Lord gave him an immediate answer. To the darkened soul he said, "God wants to be believed. More than anything else God wants to be believed. If you sandpaper your life until you have taken off all the surface roughness and yet do not believe him, He will have to cast you into outer darkness. But if you will understand that He longs, and yearns with deep desire that men shall simply take Him at his word and believe what He says, then He is satisfied to completion, and will declare you as righteous as Himself. God wants to be believed." The wise pastor was right. You become the partner of believing Abraham in the privileges granted by God when you become his partner in faith.

***CONCLUSION:***

What a privilege it is to be considered a partner of the great Abraham? But really there is not a person in the house who cannot do what Abraham did. All the man did was believe the promise that God gave to him, He staked his whole existence on God and His Word. You can do that. When you do, you too will be a partner of this great spiritual giant in the grace and goodness of our God.