

## Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

### Lesson 6 – Faith, Promises, and Law (Gal. 3:10-24)

In Lesson 5, Paul uses a story from Abraham's life to teach us that God, in His righteousness, accepts our faith in Him and counts us as righteous in His sight. To those in the first century who were placing their trust in their ability to keep the Law of Moses, Paul uses this story to show that an individual could be considered righteous in God's eyes long before the law was given to Moses. To us as sinful, unrighteous humans, the story teaches us that God wants us to trust Him and to take Him at His word and that God accepts that faith and counts, or credits, us as being righteous even though we are not. As we proceed in Galatians 3, Paul will continue to use the example of Abraham to demonstrate how **faith, God's promises, and God's law** are related.

**Faith (Gal 3:10-14).** In Gal. 3:10, Paul says that all who rely on the works of the law for justification are cursed. His basis for such an assertion is a quotation from Deut. 27:26 that says that anyone who fails to abide by everything written in the law is cursed. Paul then returns to the importance of faith in God by quoting from Habakkuk 2:4 and reminding us all that **the righteous will live by faith**. Within the context of Gal. 3:6, the word "righteous" refers to those who are counted as righteous by God. The Old Testament book of Habakkuk is relatively short, but its point is plain. In the book, the Babylonians have come to power and are in the process of conquering nations including God's people in Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet cannot understand how God can allow a wicked, pagan nation to thrive and go unpunished, especially at the expense of God's people, and Habakkuk expresses that opinion in no uncertain terms in Chapter 1 of the book. In Chapters 2 and 3 of the prophecy, God assures the prophet that evil will be punished and God's people will be delivered, but all in an appointed time and after God's purposes are accomplished. In Hab. 2:2-4, God tells the prophet in so many words to write down God's message, and, if required, be prepared to wait for its fulfillment, but never give up on it. God's deliverance would come and it would not fail, and the righteous would live their lives based on their faith in that message.

**Promise (Gal. 3:15-18).** Paul returns to the covenant God made with Abraham that we discussed in Lesson 5, and he tells the Galatians and us that the law, which was given to Moses more than 400 years after God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 15 did not nullify or modify God's covenant or promise to Abraham. **Paul's implication is that nothing can modify or nullify a promise made by God.** As we have discussed in earlier lessons, God is righteous when we are not. Abraham and his descendants gave God every opportunity and probably every reason to abandon His promise made to Abraham; but God can be counted on to always do the right thing even when we, as humans, abandon the right thing. Within the context of Paul's quotation from the book of Habakkuk, Paul is telling us that when God makes a promise, we can write it down, count on it, and, if required, wait on it; but always believe it and live our lives based on it.

We live between two truly seismic events that are revealed to mankind in the gospel message. One is the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the other is His return to claim His own. Our faith tells us that

one has happened and the other will happen. How are we to live during this interim period between these two history-altering events? Paul would say that we should always live based on our faith in God and His promises. Our lives should reflect that we are confident in the gospel, or good news, of salvation made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus and that we are equally confident in His return. **Our lives will always reflect where our faith resides, and Paul has found his confidence in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in God's righteousness which assures us that He will deliver everything He has promised.**

**The Law (Gal. 3:19-24).** Paul has told us that the law could not bring salvation, righteousness, or justification to us as humans. So why was it given? It was added because of man's transgressions (Gal. 3:19) and to serve as a tutor or guardian to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The law can tell us what is right and wrong, but it was never designed to bring us justification or to make us righteous in God's eyes. It teaches us about sin and its effects and consequences, but it does not provide for salvation or deliverance from our sins. It teaches us about God and His nature, but it also gives us a picture of ourselves and our nature. It shows us, or should show us, that we are all sinful and that we all need a Savior. The law was not contrary to God's promise to Abraham or to any other of God's promises. It was meant to be complementary to God's promise, not to replace it or change it.

**We are told to live by faith (Gal. 3:11) in what Paul has earlier called this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), and the gospel calls us to place our faith in a righteous and good God who will never abandon us or His promises. He has sought us through His Son Jesus, and He wants us to live life confidently based on the work of Jesus Christ, as opposed to relying on our relatively puny acts. He tells us to trust Him and His righteousness, and to accept the blessings which He graciously offers. Paul has tasted of a life based on such knowledge and faith, and he simply cannot understand why anyone would want to return to a life based on anything else.**

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