

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Six Doctrinal Section

V. Paul's Vindication of the Gospel Galatians 3:1 - 4:31

A. The Argument from the Experience of the Galatian Christians (Part Five)

B. The Argument from Scripture (Galatians 3:6-29)

1. Abraham and his true children (verses 6-9)

The Jews looked upon Abraham as their father. He was the most highly honored of the patriarchs, being the founder of the Jewish nation. See John 8:39,53.

a. Abraham was justified by faith - verse 6

- (1) Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 from the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. This verse is also quoted in Romans 4:3 and James 2:23. In both cases it is quoted in connection with the doctrine of justification. Note especially Romans 4:3-5:

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

The word translated "accounted or counted" in these verses (both Galatians 3:6 and Romans 4:3) is a word which was often used in business documents and means literally "to credit to one's account." Abraham did not receive "credit" for his works, but for his faith.

Excursus: The reference in James 2:23 has been confusing to many because it seems to contradict Romans 4:3-5. James speaks of works in reference to justification. Some have falsely interpreted this passage and say that faith and works are like a team of horses pulling together for our salvation. Nothing could be further from the truth. James is simply arguing that true faith will produce works. Thus Abraham's placing his son on the altar was a work which reflected the fact that Abraham believed God. He was not justified by the work itself, but was justified by faith which produced the work.

We are justified when we believe in Jesus Christ, but if we truly believe, our faith will of necessity produce its effect in our lives.

b. The true children of Abraham are those who are justified by faith

- (1) The Jews who were rejecting Christ and yet claiming to be the children of Abraham were in error. True, they were the physical seed, but certainly not the spiritual seed. John 8:39 makes this quite clear:

"They answered (the unbelieving Jews) and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

Paul makes it very clear who are the spiritual children of Abraham in Romans 4:10-25. This passage is important for it shows that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. Also, later in Galatians Paul shows that he was justified before the Law came through Moses. Therefore, Abraham was justified before any ordinances or ceremonies were instituted, which means that these elements are not at all necessary for justification. This also makes it clear that during the Old Testament era men were saved by faith and not by works. The requirements for salvation have been the same in every era. This is what is meant by the unity of the Covenant of Grace.