



“Abraham’s Faith”
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Galatia 3:6-9

This morning, we are going to read one of the foundational important passages of Paul's writing. But it is a passage that is very rarely talked about in the church. This is the first time that you hear that the blessings of Abraham tied to the gospel message brought to the Gentiles. This is the theological breakthrough that Paul gave to the church. But often, when we read the Bible, we skip over these passages that are earth-shattering. In this passage we see God's unfolding plan in the word. And the plan starts from a person to the nation of Israel, and then all the nations of the world would receive this message. This is the principle that we see over and over in the world, from one becoming many.

We see this principle from the garden of Eden. Be fruitful and multiply. This is God's plan. This is normal life, to multiply, from one becomes many. So too in Gospel's work, the plan is from one becomes many. In the passage, we see from Abraham, it became the nation of Israel, the children of Abraham. Then from the children of Abraham, the blessing of Abraham will go to all the nations. And so too from one person who comes to Singapore and starts GRII Singapore, and this church had developed and becomes the Israel of Singapore. We'll now multiply and become many, so that the nations would come to worship Jesus. And so, our passage lays out for us this plan of God. It starts with a very simple statement: “Abraham believes God and it's accounted to him as righteousness.” The first thing that I want you to realize is, that God had preached the Gospel to Abraham. Abraham heard the gospel directly not through the scripture, but from God himself. Abraham was born in the time when people worship their good works. The culmination of that is to build the tower of Babel, that would reach heaven. They want to make names for themselves. But God rejected them. God gave a calling to Abraham to follow him, as a rejection to the effort of humanity to save themselves. I think this is something that you and I need to have an honest conversation about. Because many of us think that we earn our salvation by doing something.

We think, if I work, if I'm good, I'm successful, God would give me heaven. But God looks at us, and say, none of those things would help you to earn salvation.

God rejects every effort of ours to make ourselves presentable to God. God is only interested in the broken hearted, who says all my religious works are like filthy rags. And if you and I are honest, we would say much of our religious works are motivated by wanting to get heaven from God. God says none of that is useful. It says, Abraham believes God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. And people believe in the gospel that Paul was preaching, and the gospel was you don't have to be circumcised, you don't have to do all these religious things for God to accept you. And this gospel really makes people unsettled and uneasy, because they wanted to prove themselves to be good enough for heaven. Paul said, nobody is good enough, and the Holy Spirit works, and they accepted the gospel and repented. Abraham was the first to be saved by grace. And Paul quotes one of the great verses of the Old Testament: Abraham believes, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham's faith is credited to him as righteousness.

Abraham believes that God will be faithful to the promise he made. It was not because Abraham was circumcised, it was not because Abraham built nice big altar for God, it was not because Abraham had a family devotional service every day. It was because Abraham believes what God told him. And that's why it says that the scripture, foreseeing what God is going to do, preaches the Gospel to Abraham. God himself, has been preaching this gospel to Abraham. And when Abraham believed, it was credited to him as righteousness. And this is an accounting term. It's a very strange way to talk about theology, isn't it? We like to talk about these strange Latin terms, but God talks about it in simple mathematics. Here God is giving us an accounting this. He said that, now Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness. God keeps an accounting ledger for your life. And in your life, there is two columns, debit and credit, just like your credit card statement. There will be a lot of debit or sin in our life. But what happen when we hear the gospel message that Abraham heard? That your work is never enough to save you. You can never do enough good things that God will be pleased with you. And we recognize that and run to Jesus, and we ask Him to save us. God credited to us as righteousness. Where does this righteousness come from? We get this

from Jesus. Jesus also has a ledger. Your ledger looks very bad, a lot of debits, little bit of credit. And every day, our debt of sin is getting greater and greater with God. There's never a way we pay it off. But what happens, when we believe in Jesus, God takes Jesus' ledger, and Jesus' ledger is different from ours. Debit is all blank pages, and credit column just goes on without ending, because we know Jesus came and live under the law, fulfilled the law, he never sinned. God exchanges these ledgers. He crosses our name and writes Jesus' name on it. And he takes Jesus's ledger, and he crosses Jesus' name, and he wrote your name. That's what happened in Abraham's life, that's what happened in your life and my life. God credited to us Jesus' ledger, his righteousness. And he looks at you and says, nothing you can do to improve this ledger. And he looks at Jesus ledger and says nothing that you can do to escape the judgement that I'm going to give you. You and I need to realize that our works would never make us acceptable to God.

We come from background and culture, in which we think good people are benefited and bad people are punished. And God says, leave that behind, believe, and I will give you what you're searching for. And so, God gives this wonderful promise to Abraham, count the stars, and so your descendants be. And Abraham believed what the gospel that was preached to him. God gives this huge promise to Abraham, and Abraham did something more incredible, he believed it! That's the gospel message, isn't it? Because your works are failing, but God says, I will do what you can't do. Believe me! Trust me! And I will give you eternal life. And the gospel message, is we believe, we put our whole confidence on what God has promised to do for us. Abraham believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness. This was the gospel preached beforehand to Abraham.

Then out of Abraham grew a nation. So why out of the gospel preached to Abraham, you need the nation of Israel? Why does it say, those who believe would become men of faith? Because God had chosen not just to preach the gospel to an individual, but he chose to display the gospel through the church. He wants the gospel to be displayed to the world by you and me. Just as it was displayed in Israel. God chose one people out of all the world, to be his people. And they had to identify themselves, as the people of God. And so, God had given the promise so that the Gospel is put on display. Paul says this in Galatians 3:1. He says, “it was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.” The gospel was given to be put on display. And the best

way for the gospel to be put on display is for you to function as the church. Why do we need to identify as the body, as the church, that meets together? It's because you're God's gospel tracts to the world. You are the one displaying the gospel to everybody around us. And when you do it by yourselves in the office, that has some power. But when you do it together, as a body, as a church, it is filled with great power. And so, the first thing we need to do, to display the gospel is for us to be children of Abraham, because those who have faith become children of Abraham.

Paul is telling Galatians, is for them to believe this message themselves. Now when a Jew hears that you need to believe to become sons of Abraham, they think that's not right. Because the Jews are always proud that they are genetically the descendants of Abraham. This was their badge of honor that they carried everywhere in the world, they were descendants, they never married outside of the people of Abraham. And now Paul is giving his radical statement, that everybody has the same faith as Abraham is now Abraham's children. Where did he get this idea from? He got it from the conversation Jesus had with the Jews. Jesus is talking about truth and freedom. And then he talks to them, “were you not son of Abraham?” Jesus said, if you were the children of Abraham, you will do the works that Abraham did. This is important thing for us. What did Abraham do, that had to be repeated by the Jews, so that they could be sons of Abraham? Up until now, they thought, if I'm genetically Jews and if I follow laws of Moses, God will be happy with me. But now, the Messiah said that you must do the very thing as Abraham did, only then you will be saved. So, what did Abraham do? What is this you and I have to do in order to be the sons of Abraham? Abraham believes. Abraham waited for the day when the Messiah would come. So, the sons of Abraham are those who do what Abraham does. They have faith in the gospel message. The first thing that you and I need to do, is to make sure that we are no longer resting in our religion works, but in the faith to Messiah. Because this is not the new message, this is the gospel that was preached to Abraham, and preached to all generation. The second thing we then do once we become sons of Abraham, is we have to identify with God's people. We are identified through baptism. Sometimes we think what's the relevancy of baptism. Baptism is you and I proclaiming to the world, that we identify with this group of people. This is a big problem throughout history. Because when the gospel goes into new places, the gospel confronts the society. And the church needs to display Christ in the society that is

anti-Christian. The Jews were called out of all the people in the world given on the promise land and said, "You will display the gospel". Now Christ has risen, the gospel has been preached and the people in the area of Galatia has accepted the gospel. And if that has happened, now they have a problem in the church. Because in Israel, everybody was Jewish. All the people in the church were Jews. But they are now outside of Jerusalem, in the city of Galatian. In this region, both Jews and gentile are living together. And they were trying to figure out what is the meaning to be a church as a multi racial. And some people were saying while we need to make all these non-Jews in the Jews first. For us to worship together, you must become like us. And so, the gentile was being told to be circumcised. Because, if you want to worship Christ, then you need to become Jewish, because we can't associate with you if you are not like us. And they trying to preach a different gospel to them. And these gentile believers are confused. How do they identify with the people of Gods. If I don't get circumcise, I can't go to the church, I can't worship in the synagogue and I can't worship with the Christians. I'm no longer worshipping idols, so I don't want to go back to the temple and worship in the temple. And they're in the position of who am I and how do I perform my religion duties? Paul said to them, that is by faith you have become sons of God. That's it enough. You are now saved; you are now displaying the gospel message to the world. Paul said its Gospel messages have been display for all to see by gentile believing by faith.

Sometimes we want the gospel to be believed by many people, but we want them to become Reformed Evangelical people first, right? Yeah, you must dress like us, and everyone have at least three STEM shirts in their closet. We think that we must convert people to Reformed Evangelical first before they can become part of the movement of God and believe in the gospel. This was a huge problem of the Church in Indonesia during the late 19th century. The missionaries that came from England and Netherland, they're preaching their gospel in Indonesia. For example, in West Java, many Sundanese people would come to their faith. And churches were being form. But missionaries told the people in the church, that you can't be circumcised anymore, because that's Islam. So, if you become a Christian, you can't circumcise your children. It just means you still think about Islam. The problem is, Sundanese people circumcise their children before Islam come to Indonesia. It was just part of their culture. And what was happening is, the missionary asked the Sundanese *Ringkasan khotbah ini belum diperiksa oleh pengkhotbah.*

to stop being Sundanese and have to become European, only then you become a Christian. You have to dress like European. And if you want to be a Christian family, you have to act like European. And all these Sundanese people said, "but I don't want to be European, I want to be Sundanese." So, they went back to Islam. And I think it's happening still today, isn't it? The God has called us to display the gospel by becoming part of the church. But the churches want you to confront becoming like us then you can worship with us. So, if your hair is blue you can't come to the church. If you are a guy, you must remove your earring first before you come to the church. You can't come to the church if you wear a T-shirt. We began to expect them to dress in a certain way. How are we inviting people to identify with the church? One of the beauties of the church is, that it said everybody is saved in the same way. Paul said in the church in Galatia, that all these Jews and all these Gentiles are both saved exactly the same. Saved by grace, not by works. The world doesn't believe that. We are all saved by grace alone. It doesn't matter how smart you are, how rich you are, how many legs you have, what matter is you are saved by grace alone. And that's a church called to display Christ that was crucified to the world.

That's why Paul said that you are saved by faith, that you are giving this blessing of Abraham. So that we have confidence that we inherit what God gave to Abraham. Because the world doesn't have this inheritance. What did we inherit? Paul already told us in Galatia that we inherit 2 things: faith and the spirit. Our first inheritance is that we know that we are saved by faith and faith alone. And the second inheritance we get is that we have the spirit of God inside of us. It is an insurance of our salvation. When you sin and Satan is saying that God will never forgive you. The Holy Spirit will be there, saying I love you; Christ has paid for everything, you are beautiful from God sides. And the Holy Spirit takes the ledger of Jesus with your name on the top and looks through the ledger. We have assurance from God in our heart. And so, the gospel was preached to Abraham and the gospel was displayed in the church. We live by this inheritance of Abraham that we have. And finally, the gospel is spread to the nation. And that was what Paul here describe, the great work that God has done. He links the promises, that faith, to the son of Abraham, to the blessing to all the nation of the world. Between God proclaim the gospel in the world, we see in the gospel is the church. He never intended the gospel to stop here. The churches are God's method of taking the gospel to the whole nation. If were honest about

that thought, we like the fact that the gospel was preached to Abraham and now, we live in communities those who believe. And we stop there, we think that's enough. God said, "That's just beginning." The whole purpose of calling is real, so that the whole nation would be blessed. This is God intention from the beginning. And here in verse 8, God through Paul writing, make clear to all of us what is the intention from all the way back in the book of Genesis. This is a radical statement that Paul is telling the churches in Galatia. That you believe because of what God did to the gospel message. This was God's plan from all the way in the beginning. And now God's plan is for you to continue to display this gospel, so that all the nation, not just the people in Galatia, will have the gospel message.

The connector between the gospel and the nation to believe in Jesus, is Israel. We see that God has a plan from the beginning, to call one nation and this nation will be used to proclaim the gospel. This was the calling of Israel to be the priest. And God didn't just give them this calling of responsibilities, but then He gave them all the opportunities needed to do it. What did Israel do with this opportunity? Solomon built the temple, but even before Solomon die, he already starts to worship idol. It didn't even take a next generation to start worship in idol. God said you have no other God before Me, you must worship Me alone. Solomon has already begun to leave that, and it goes on and on until we read in the book of Judges that they were no better than the nations around them. Israel fails in their mission. When you read the book of Jonah at the end of the Old Testament, Jonah is the conclusion of the history of Israel. He is the living embodiment of what Israel is like.

God continue to work though, so the gospel goes forward. Israel fails. God mission continues. You see this when Naaman the Syrian general who has leprosy, from a little Jewish slave girl, he hears about the prophet in Israel and goes to be healed. And what did he said after he was healed? He said, "now I know there is no God throughout entire world except the God of Israel." Despite Israel failure, God continue to take His name and His fame to the world around Him. Israel was given this mandate. Israel was given all the opportunity to preach the gospel. But Israel left and didn't do it, but God continue to be faithful to His mission. When we seem no hope anymore the Messiah came. And the church was born. And now the gospel started to be preached. And the nations were being blessed. Salvation was coming to them. The gospel went to the gentile, to the Greek and to the Roman, to the Dutch, to the Indonesian, to the Chinese and now the gospel need continue to go forward to the end of the world throughout the church.

The question we have for us at the end of today messages: will we fail like Israel, or we will take up this cause of the gospel? Will we be faithful to the work that God has commission us to do? Will we take advantage of the opportunity to display the gospel messages? Will we fail like Israel fail? And will we be replaced by somebody else who will do these tasks? Let us pray.