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A1010 – March 7, 2010 – Galatians 3:6-8 – Father Abraham

Alright, this time we start with Galatians 3:6. Gal 3:6 is a quote from the OT so I hope you read Genesis 12-17 because we'll go back to those chapters. Before we go back let's make some observations. Gal 3:6 is a quote from where? Check your margin? If you have a study Bible you should have cross references. If you don't have a study Bible then I recommend the Ryrie Study Bible in NASB translation. If you already have a study Bible where is the quote from? Gen 15:6. Now look at Gal 3:8, another quote. This one is from where, check your margin? Gen 12:3. Now look at Gal 3:10 and again, you should see it's a quote from the OT. Where does the margin point you? Deut 27:26. So the first two are from the time of Abraham, the third one is from the time of Moses. Then if you come to Gal 3:11 you'll see another quote, where does it come from? Hab 2:4. That's the time of the Exile, the end of the OT. Gal 3:12 and this one is from where? Lev 18:5. And in Gal 3:13 you should have another quotation. Deut 21:23. So Lev and Deut, both from Moses. And finally, Gal 3:16 and where's the quote from? Gen 22:18. So we're back to Abraham. Those are just observations. But what are the observations telling you? That whatever doctrine Paul is teaching the Galatians was taught in the OT. I want to impress upon you that this is not new with the New Testament, there is very little new in the NT. And so you can see it would be much easier if we started studying the OT before we ever come to the NT. About 2/3 of your Bible is OT so I can only conclude from that we ought to be teaching two out of every three times from the OT. And the failure of the church to follow this is one of the main reason churches don't know the Bible. If churches just teach the NT then they never get the background of these most basic doctrines of the Christian faith. My parents tell me their pastor hardly ever mentions the OT. So seldom does he mention it that when they do they get all excited that actually they get to turn to that portion of the Bible. And I'm convinced that if we knew our OT about 95% of

the confusions we face would go away. But no, we fool around and stumble around and don't pay attention to it.

So we are going to pay attention to it. Gal 3:6 is one of Paul's favorite quotations from the OT. It comes from Gen 15:6. But before we go to Gen 15:6 let's go to Josh 24. There are three doctrines that are taught in the NT with Abraham. Abraham is the example of the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of election. Two of these are being emphasized in Galatians by Paul, the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of faith. The book of Romans emphasizes the doctrine of election in Rom 9, 10 and 11. And we want to look briefly at the doctrine of election because it gives you the background of Abraham. Why did God call Abraham? Lots of people God could have chosen, why Abraham. I want you to see that God doesn't play favorites. Election is not God looking down and seeing how good someone is and saying, oh, he's such a good little boy, I choose him. It has nothing to do with that. Election is about God looking down at dirty rotten sinners and loving this one because He loves this one. Now Joshua is addressing the nation Israel. This is one of the speeches of history where we grab the events for our framework. The events we go over and over aren't randomly chosen, they're taken from the great speeches, addresses and prayers in Scripture. So verse 2, he's going to start by reciting history. History is vitally important. If we forget history we forget God because history reveals the work of God and so we better have a good understanding of biblical history because that tells us who God is, it tells us who man is. "Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River," that's the Euphrates River he's referring to and he's talking about east of the Euphrates over in modern day Iraq, he says, "your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods." Alright, there's the great family of Abraham, and what did they do? They worshiped other gods. Abraham may have been a successful businessman, may have been very sincere, may have been a good family man, but the Scriptural analysis is that he served other gods, he was an idolater. Verse 3, "Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River," now ask yourself, who took Abraham? God took him. Abraham didn't just take off on his own. Who's going to just pick up and move their family hundreds of miles away leaving assets, business contacts, religious system, leave all that behind for no reason. You'd have to have some pretty good reasons to do that. People

don't just take off without some very good reasons. Let's look further. Not only did I take him from beyond the River, I "led him through all the land of Canaan," who led him? God led him. Abraham did not go on his own. "and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac," who gave him a son when he was 100 years old? God did that. It's all God, God, God. It's not Abraham, Abraham, Abraham. And it's not you, you, you either. It's not me, me, me. It's God. And if you read the of the speech it's all God did this and God did that, God led them out of Egypt and God split the Red Sea and God led them to Sinai and God led the Conquest. Why do you suppose it says that over and over and over? Because we are so hard headed that God has to say it over and over just to get it through our thick skulls that *He is the giver and we are the receivers*. So you can't get on your high horse about all you do, you don't do a thing, God does everything and if God pulled back on His grace for five seconds you'd realize it's God's grace that was holding me up all along. God is the one doing it. So you see Abraham wasn't some plaster saint and God said, oh, you're just so impressive. Abraham served other gods, he worshipped demonically inspired idols, he worshipped the heavens, he worshipped the stars, and he was deeply into the zodiac and astrology. God didn't select him because of anything good in him and God didn't select you because of anything good in you. It has simply to do with the fact that God loved him.

Now go back to Gen 15:6 where Abraham believed God. This verse is actually spoken over in Ur, over on the other side of the River. This is the critical verse quoted by Paul to the Galatians. "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." Here's the deal. In the Hebrew the verb "believed" is in the perfect tense, the perfect tense in the Hebrew is the past tense. So it's wrong to translate this "Then he believed..." The fact is he'd already believed and Paul knew Hebrew, which is why he translated this past tense verb with the aorist over in Galatians. Paul knew that Abraham had already believed before this point. So this is an insertion in the text at this point. It didn't happen at this point, we're just getting a notification that this Abraham was a believer when this happened. We'd translate it, "having believed in the Lord; and having it reckoned to him as righteousness," so forth and so on, God entered the covenant with Abraham. The point being that the author is making sure we know that when God entered into a covenant with Abraham, Abraham was a believer. God didn't come into a contract with an unbelieving Abraham, he came into a contract with a believing Abraham. But the perfect tense proves that Abraham didn't become

a believer in Gen 15. He had already become a believer and so let's turn to Gen 12 when he became a believer. This Call of Abraham defines salvation and the gospel for all time. If you think you have salvation apart from Gen 12 and you just picked it up in the gospel of John or something, you're wrong, you have salvation because of Gen 12 and the promises made to Abraham. Gen 12:1-3 gives the promises God made to Abraham. Now skim through 12:1-3. Do you see three promises in that section? What is it that God is going to give him in verse 1, a "land." What is going to give him in verse 2, "a seed." What is He going to give him in verse 3, a blessing? A blessing to who? The entire world. It's this third verse that Paul says is the backbone of Gentile salvation. He's saying that this is the gospel packed right in this verse that opens the door for Gentiles to be justified by faith just like Jews. It was true in the OT and it's true in the NT. It was true for Rahab, the Canaanite harlot; it was true for Ruth, the Moabitess, and it is true for you as an American. Now let's look further. In v 1 what was Abraham to do in order that this whole thing happen? "Go." Well, where was he at the time? Ur. The other side of the River. What's the significance of where he was? He was in the heart of where Nimrod developed his empire, the tower of Babel. Abraham came from the very heart of the world system. And God said I want you to get out of there. You say why does God do that? By doing that isn't God taking Abraham away from the very people he's to bless? Yes, He is. Why is He doing that? Because Abraham has got to first get away from paganism so he can develop spiritually and be a blessing. So there's a recoil strategy here that we want to observe. You have a pagan culture, God calls people out of the pagan culture, and God prepares the person and inserts them back in the pagan culture. That's the story of Abraham, that's the story of Moses, that's the story of Joshua, that's the cycle you see over and over and over in the OT. You've got to come out of the world to get the training that you need to go back into the world.

And the application of that is that when you are a new believer you have got to separate from the culture. If you are ever going to get your head screwed on right, if you are ever going to be a major testimony you have got to separate from the culture. It is naïve to think that you can become a believer on Monday and a great witness for Christ on Tuesday. You simply can't do it as a new baby believer, you don't know anything and so you are still reflecting the culture and now you have to go back and re-work your thinking and after you've done that then God can use you in marvelous ways and so he

will re-insert you into the culture and you can have at it, go make waves or something.

So Abraham, you can see in verse 4, packed his bags, loaded up his family on camels and they took off. So Abraham believed the promises and it's that point that Gen 15:6 is recounting, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness at this point. And then verse 4 gives you a little note about Abraham's age when he left Haran. They had to stop here along the way because Abraham's dad got sick and so they hung out about five years before his dad dies, and when they set out from here Abraham was how old? 75. Alright, remember that number and turn to Gen 17.

In Gen 17 Abraham already had the promises that a seed was going to come forth from him and he and Sarai had tried for years and she couldn't have a baby so she said, Abraham, why don't you go into the maid and I'll have a son through her and so they went through this gimmick procedure to shortcut God's promises and have a son and his name was Ishmael. And out of that we have journalists making a living today off of this decision because they are now able to report all the hatred of the Arab population for the Israeli population. Every day some journalist is getting a paycheck because of this decision because the Arab population, at least a very large portion, comes from Ishmael. But in any case that's the situation in Gen 17. And here we have another note about Abraham's age. "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram again." And the content of this revelation is that no, no, Abraham, your seed is not going to come through Hagar the maid it's going to come through your wife Sarah. And this is just as unbelievable to ancient man as it was to modern man, which shows you these people were not some gullible types. But God did it and gave them miraculously a son named Isaac. But we want to notice something now about Abraham's age and a little surgery that Abraham had to go through at 100 years of age. Verse 10. The basic point we want to make here is simply that Abraham believed and was reckoned as righteous at least 25 years before he was circumcised. He believed back in Gen 12, at that instant of time he was reckoned righteous; he was less than 75 years of age. Now at a hundred years of age he gets circumcised. So does circumcision in the flesh have anything to do with Abraham's justification? Absolutely nothing at all.

Now with that background let's go back to Gal 3:6. To start he says **just as Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Now the words **just as** in the Greek are the word *kathos*. *k-a-t-h-o-s* and it's an adverb of comparison. So Paul is making a point of comparison between the Galatian believers and Abraham. Something is the same for Abraham as it is for the Galatians and here it is: **just as Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS** so they believed God and it was reckoned to them as righteousness. So with respect to how you are reckoned righteous there is not a particle of difference between the Galatians and Abraham, you, me. It doesn't matter who you are, it occurs by believing God. And so believing God is the means of being justified and of course, it's the means of being sanctified. Same means for both; they are two different phases of your salvation but they occur by the same means. Justification is phase one and this deals with your position, how are you made right with God and it is through faith. Sanctification is phase two and this deals with your experience, how do you grow in the Christian life and it too is through faith. So that's the comparison he's setting up now let's look in detail and make some points.

Verse 6, **just as Abraham**, Abraham is the subject, Abraham did something and the thing he did is the verb **BELIEVED**; that's the beginning of the quote from Gen 15. So all Paul is doing here is quoting the OT word of God. The verb **believed** is third person singular, so the one who believed here is Abraham. God didn't believe for Abraham. God convinced Abraham over in Ur so that he did believe. And the verb is the aorist tense and the aorist tense is significant for a number of reasons we'll highlight. Now the aorist tense (we don't quite have anything like it in the English) but here's what it means; an action in the past without regard to its duration. In other words, it tells you it happened in the past, but it doesn't tell you how long it happened. The context has to determine if it was an ongoing action or a point action. And in this context, which is a quote from the OT, it's a point action. It's saying in Gen 15:6 Abraham had believed at a past point in time at which time his belief was reckoned as righteousness. And we now know that time to be Gen 12. Now what this means for you is that you are saved at an instant in time. Every once in awhile you get Christians who say you've got to keep on believing, you've got to persevere in the faith if you lose the faith then you lose you're salvation or you were never saved to begin with. That is nonsense. The whole point is that the moment that Abraham believed God his belief

was reckoned to him as righteousness. Instant - at a point in time. And you are justified the same way. You may not remember when you believed, it doesn't matter, what matters is that you did believe because at that point God knows you believed and He justified you. So point number one of the aorist tense is that you don't have to persevere in belief to be justified. You are justified at an instant of time.

Point number two is that sometimes people will say, well, you've got to have the right amount of faith. Now there are passages that speak about the amount of faith but those have to do with phase two of your salvation. Phase one is justification and that's your position and you never read in the word of God any passage about amounts of faith in phase one. Amounts of faith are reserved for phase two, you can believe more or less of the word of God depending on your sanctification. But it is totally out of place to talk about amount of faith with respect to phase one justification. Either you believe God or you don't believe God and there's none of this did you believe enough business.

Point three we gather from the aorist concerns having the right kind of faith and people will say, oh, you did that sin; well a real believer can't do that sin so you didn't have the right kind of faith. And this is making an arbitrary list of pet sins and for support they quote James 2, the faith of the demons and see, the demons believe and obviously it doesn't save them and so there are different kinds of faith, saving and non-saving and James 2 is the all-time favorite verse for proving that there are different kinds of faith. Just a slight problem there because James is putting those words in the mouth of a hypothetical opponent. Always the introductory clause James uses, in all Greek literature biblical and non-biblical, is used to introduce an opponent. And so James isn't giving you doctrine to believe, James is saying my hypothetical opponent is saying this and I disagree with my hypothetical opponent. James is saying it's a wrong argument. So you can't argue different kinds of faith from James 2. There is only one kind of faith and if you get into the different kinds of faith argument all you leave people with is putting their faith in faith, did I have the right kind of faith and that's wrong. You can have a different object of faith, you can put your faith in the wrong object, we're not arguing against that point, we're simply saying there is no such thing as different kinds of faith.

Now we want to look at the object of Abraham's faith in verse 6. Abraham believed who? **God**. Notice it does not say Abraham believed IN God. There is no preposition before God. The issue is not did Abraham believe in God in the sense that Abraham believed in God's existence and that was sufficient to be reckoned as righteous. No, no, if someone says I believe in God that is not sufficient for them to be reckoned as righteous. And parents, you have to be very careful on this because you want to know if your children understand or not so you have to ask a million questions of these kids because they can learn to mimic the words you say and give the right answers. So the only way to know if they really understand is to ask them from all different angles. I have had children come into my office who want to get water baptized and I will ask them the basic question, if you were to walk out of here today and get hit by a truck and die would you go to heaven? Yes. Why? Because I believe in God. And that's not sufficient for anyone to get to heaven. Believing that God is there doesn't save, never has saved, never will save. Everyone knows God is there. That's Rom 1. There is not a person that has ever lived that didn't know God is there. If they did they couldn't be held accountable. But they are held accountable. They may not admit they know. But Rom 1 says they know and they're suppressing that knowledge. Deep down they know. Maybe they've squashed it so long they have convinced themselves they don't know He exists. Very possible, happens all the time. But every member of the human race has known at one time or another. So it is not enough to believe IN God. You must **believe God**. Abraham **believed God**. So what's the difference? The difference is Abraham believed something God said. He believed in some verbal revelation. He believed the promises of a land, seed and worldwide blessing of Gen 12:1-3. See, this is not what some of the liberal crowd want us to think. They want us to think Abraham set out on this great journey on the basis of a hunch. I think I heard a voice in my head or something. No, no, no, it was very specific information that God spoke to Abraham. And obviously it was sufficiently convincing for Abraham to pack his bag and move his entire family across a great desert not knowing a thing about the land other than God promised it. So what we're saying here is that to believe someone they've got to sufficiently reveal their character to you as trustworthy. It doesn't matter the situation in life. You can't believe someone who hasn't sufficiently revealed their character to you. You may be naïve and place your faith in every Joe that walks through the door but one day you're going to get burned, I guarantee it. But if you're smart you'll watch and see if they've got a trustworthy character. And God obviously showed Abraham His

character. It's not just believing in a vague notion. You can't believe a vague notion. There's nothing there to trust. I use this with my kids and you can do this experiment in your own home. I'll stand them up on the couch backwards and I'll tell them to close their eyes and then I'll start to talk to them. Alright Joshua, I'm standing right behind you and if you fall back I'll catch you. And they fall back. Why? Because they trust me. Why do they trust me? Because over and over and over I've shown them I'm trustworthy. They know my character. They know how strong I am and so they will fall right back into my arms and I save them every time. Then I'll take them and I'll stand them up again and I'll put their little sister Corah behind them and I'll say, alright, Corah is behind you now fall back? No daddy, I don't want to. Well why not? What's wrong, you don't like Corah? No dad, it's not that, I like her. Well what is it? Why won't you fall back? And eventually we find it's because she can't catch me, she just can't do it. I've seen little Corah and she's not strong enough to catch me and if I fall back I'll go smack on the floor. So if you are ever going to trust the first requirement is that the object is trustworthy. And that's the issue here in verse 6. Abraham believed God. So evidently God was not some figment of Abraham's imagination. God more than adequately revealed Himself as trustworthy and we'll see just how here in a moment in one of the most fascinating texts in the NT.

Now we come to the result of believing God. When Abraham believed **it was reckoned to him as righteousness**. Two crucial words here, **reckoned** and **righteousness**. **It was reckoned**. It being Abraham's faith **was reckoned to him**. The word **reckoned** looks like this, *l-o-g-i-z-o* and it's a mathematical word, it's an accounting word. It means to count. So if you can count 1, 2, 3, 4 you can understand justification. So here we are again in our -1, 0, +1 analogy. It's because of this word I use the analogy. So go back to Creation. At Creation everything was very good, there was no sin. And Adam was very good so mathematically we'll say Adam was at 0, he wasn't minus righteousness and he wasn't plus righteousness, he still had to learn obedience to God so we'll just say Adam was a 0. Then we have the Fall and at the Fall Adam rebelled and he instantly went to minus righteousness, -1. So if God were counting Adam He'd say you're not a nothing, you're worse than nothing, you're -1, you're in debt, you're in trouble, very serious trouble. I count you - 1 righteousness. But it's not only Adam that went to -1. Everyone in the human race went to -1, that's Rom 5:12... "...just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death

spread to all men, because all sinned—“ so all sinned in Adam, therefore all are at -1. And that’s active voice sinned, you sinned in Adam, the entire human race was in Adam and we are all - righteousness. You may not like that, you may think that’s not fair but you’ve only heard half the story so hold your judgment. In Adam the whole human race is – righteousness and that’s not a good place to be when it comes to eternal issues because God is holy and – righteousness is going to call down the justice of God and the justice of God is going to execute judgment. And you are standing there as naked spiritually as Adam and Eve were physically; you are naked as a jaybird before God and so if there is going to be any hope there has got to be some provision of righteousness coming from outside of yourself. And that righteousness came by Jesus Christ. So if it upsets you that God counts you as – righteousness in the one man Adam then just remember that God provided + righteousness in the one man Jesus Christ. There’s not going to be a different savior for everyone that falls. God says all fall in Adam so all can be made alive in Jesus Christ. Not all will be made alive, only those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham and believe, but Jesus Christ did die for all. So just like the Ark of Noah was available for all human beings to get into and the message was preached to all and there was room left over on the ark after all the animals were loaded: 1.4 million square feet of space, 522 railroad box cars and only about 15,000 different kinds on the ark. So probably about 2/3 of the ark was empty. EMPTY. And what that emptiness is there for is as a startling reminder that the door was open, the provision was there for more to be saved but they didn’t want to be saved. It’s a devastating picture because what it shows is that if a person doesn’t believe in Jesus Christ it’s because they don’t want to be saved. NO one is going to be saved that doesn’t want to be saved. Those people that didn’t get on the ark didn’t want to be on the ark. And every person that wanted to be on the ark got on the ark. So everyone that wants to be saved will be saved and everyone else simply doesn’t want it. So you remember that as you witness to people and they reject Jesus Christ over and over because they are saying I don’t want to be saved. And they are no different than those people that didn’t want to be on the ark. They are in rebellion against God.

So we’ve handled our first word and that word is reckoned, it means to count, so what he’s saying is that Abraham believed God and at that moment his faith was counted to him as + righteousness. Now what is **righteousness**. This is our word *dikaiosune* and this is a legal word, it was used in the court

of law when the verdict was given. And the verdict was either guilty or righteous. And so what this is saying is that the verdict given to Abraham is **righteousness**, why? Because he believed. Point action in an instant of time - the verdict was Abraham is righteous, +1. After that Abraham failed many times; Abraham lacked faith a number of times but that did not have a thing to do with what happened in God's court of law the day he believed. On the day he believed God said, verdict Abraham, righteous. Not because of his own righteousness, Abraham didn't have any righteousness of his own as we saw in Joshua, he worshipped idols. But verdict righteousness because he believed God's promises that day.

Now just think of what passes today for what is required for salvation. Keep the sacraments? Does that have anything to do with how to be right with God? Baloney. There is nothing, absolutely nothing about that. Water baptism? Baloney. Commitment card? Walk an aisle? Prayer? These things have their place but not in how to be justified before God. They have nothing to do with it. Faith, faith alone.

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