

Saved and Sealed by the Spirit

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Big Idea

The blessing of Abraham is the Spirit of God which comes through faith (Gal 3:14)

1. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is confirmation of one's belonging to God
2. Abraham was promised to bless the nations - that blessing is the Spirit
3. Faith in Christ makes one a child of Abraham and a child of promise

Opener

A little over a week ago, we celebrated my sons birthday, and one of the things that we got him was a nugget couch. The nugget couch is a pretty cool invention as it is composed of different sized cushions that may be constructed into a couch or made into a fort or slide or lounge. Our son is only one, so he can't really build anything with it, but we find joy in watching him play on it

or around it. As the gift givers, his mother and I feel honored in our sons joy in the gift. As he gets older, we will find joy and honor in seeing him build forts and using it to its fullest capacity, but if he got older and stopped using it because he did not feel that he had earned it, we would feel dishonored.

If our son came to us and said, here is two dollars that I have saved up. Today I will build a fort, we wouldn't want the two dollars, we would just want him to freely play on the fully paid for gift.

This is much how we as Christians treat the gift of Salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we first receive the gift of Jesus Christ as our Savior and the Holy Spirit as the seal of our salvation, we rejoice and have excitement over the gift, but in time, we start to shift away from joyful reception to something else. Instead of honoring the gift giver through living in gratitude of the gift, we begin to set aside the gift and live like we did before the gift, or start living under a weight of guilt that we must repay the gift.

The gift of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit are gifts of God that we may receive freely, and the only appropriate response is to respond with joy and gratitude to give honor and thanks to the gift giver in awareness that the gift is far more valuable than we could ever repay! Let's turn to our passage for the day:

Gift of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 3:1–6 ESV

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

We spent the past two weeks looking at Paul’s rebuke of Peter and how through this event, Paul proclaims the importance of the independence of the Gospel from God alone that proclaims salvation through Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone. And here, we see Paul shift from his defense of his apostleship and the independence of the Gospel into the truth of Gospel in Galatia. First Paul appeals to the Galatians experience of the Holy Spirit in their churches as assurance that the Galatians have been admitted into the Church by faith.

In Acts, we see Peter make the same defense on behalf of Gentile Christians at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:

Acts 15:7–11 ESV

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, [slide] and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Paul admonishes the Galatians to take a moment and reflect on their own experience in the truth of Christ. They have received the Gospel from Paul of Jesus Christ crucified for them that they heard and believed. And through belief, they were filled with the Holy Spirit that they may be saved! Paul encourages them to look at their own personal experiences of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and as a corporate body of the church to see the Holy Spirit at work in and through them.

How quick we are to fall away from the truth of the Gospel of grace alone and to turn away from the power of the Holy Spirit in us!

Paul asks, who has bewitched you: What sorcery is this that causes you to be blinded to what you have seen?! What sorcery has caused you to turn your vision from the cross to yourselves as the means of salvation? What kind of magic are these false brothers using that you desert the Gospel that I have preached to you?!

The Galatians had believed the Gospel and were saved and sealed by the Holy Spirit, and now Paul encourages them to not turn away from the Grace that has saved them. Do not reject the promise that was given to Abraham which is the Holy Spirit in you and in your midst.

Salvation does not begin with being initiated in the church through the Holy Spirit and then being on your own to perfect yourself. It is not God's work to justify and your work to sanctify. It is not God who declares you righteous in Christ's righteousness and then abandons you to maintain and expand that righteousness. No, it is all God! God declares you righteous in Christ and empowers you through the Holy Spirit to be holy and grow in holiness. It is grace beginning, middle, and end.

Paul does not point out their foolishness so that they may droop their heads in guilt and shame, but for the sake of their joy and gratitude.

Paul reminds the Galatians that God did not begin a work in

you that He will not complete, and God has not abandoned you. God has extended to you a gift, and you should respond to that gift with gratitude because that gift is the promise given to Abraham, the gift of the Holy Spirit in you!

The Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit as a gift to apply salvation to God's own — both Jew and Gentile!

This gift comes by faith — by trust in the gift giver

Galatians 3:7-9 ESV

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Paul begins by defending the true Gospel in Galatia through an appeal to the churches' experience of the gift of the Holy Spirit. You may know that this Gospel is true and that you are participants in the body of Christ because of the Spirit working in and through you. He continues by defending the true Gospel through an appeal to Scripture.

Paul quotes Genesis 15 and Genesis 12 to reveal that God

proclaimed Abraham righteous on the grounds of faith, not on the grounds of obedience. It was through trust in God's promise that God counted Abraham as righteous, and not only Abraham but all who receive the gift of grace and believe in Jesus Christ! The true children of Abraham are not those of blood but those of faith! In Abraham was the promised child. It wasn't just Isaac that God was referring to but Jesus Christ who would come through the lineage of Abraham and Isaac.

Through Abraham's trust in the promise, all nations were blessed, and Abraham was counted as righteous by faith before receiving the sign of circumcision and well before Israel received the law.

The gift comes by faith! By putting one's trust in the gift-giver.

Alive by faith - freed from the curse

Galatians 3:10-14 ESV

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." [slide] But the law is not

of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— [slide] so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The law was given to guard and to guide Israel as the people of God. It had the purpose to instruct and protect the people of Israel as God’s chosen people. Chosen to carry the promise of Jesus Christ throughout their generations until Jesus came into this world born of a virgin. The law was good in that it explained how to live in the presence of God as God’s people, but the law was bad in that every Israelite stood condemned before the law.

The righteous shall live by faith, not by works of the law. In our Wednesday night Bible study, someone pointed out that Daniel was found blameless before God and before King Darius, and they asked what this could mean since we know that no one is blameless. We know from Paul’s other epistles that no one outside of Christ is without sin and blameless before God, so what we see in the exemplary Old Testament heroes are men of faith.

Daniel stands blameless before God, because his trust is in the God of promise. Daniel looks to the promise for his hope in exile, and like Abraham, this faith is counted to him as

righteousness — by faith, Daniel stands blameless before God, not in his own strength but in the promise.

It is the promise that redeems us. The promised seed of Jesus Christ, who became a curse to redeem us from the curse, and the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit that we may have the presence of God in our midst as a gift!

Ephesians 1:13–14 ESV

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Jesus Christ became a curse under the law to free us from the law, that we may stand in him! To hear the word and believe, and the result of that hearing and believing is the filling of the Holy Spirit who is given by the Father and the Son to save and seal us for the coming glory.

The Blessing of Abraham

In today's passage we see three points: [slide]

1. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is confirmation of one's belonging to God

2. Faith in Christ makes one a child of Abraham and a child of promise

3. Abraham was promised to bless the nations - that blessing is the Spirit of Christ / the Spirit of Salvation

[slide]

The blessing of Abraham is the Spirit of God received through faith.

Salvation, which comes from the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit is a gift of grace. It is not something that we can earn by our works, and it is not something that we have to repay upon reception. It is not an offer which we receive and then fulfill a contractual obligation, but it is the free gift, the free favor of God to save!

By free, I do not mean that this grace is without cost. This grace was incredibly costly as it cost the life of the Son of God on the cross to be a substitute for you and I. No, this grace is free in that it was a free act of God. The Son did not come by coercion. The Father did not send the Son by coercion. This is a gift given in the freedom of God to act as He wills.

In the first century, society functioned through a culture of reciprocity. Relationships were central to society, and a

major component of this society was grace. . . that is, gift giving. A person of means gave gifts to those without means, whether that be a city or the poor, and in return they received honor and gratitude. That response is what made it a culture of reciprocity, and that response was faithfulness to the gift-giver. Faith is the only appropriate response to grace.

God gave humanity a gift of immeasurable value to pay a debt that was beyond measure. God not only gives the gift of grace, but God gives us His Spirit to regenerate and empower us to respond in faith. God deserves worship and honor and gratitude for the gift, but he does not expect us to repay Him for the gift. Instead God expects us to live in the joy and gratitude of the gift in order to honor Him for who He is.

So, today, I would like to encourage you to recognize the price of grace, that Jesus Christ the Son of God came and died for sins, your sins, and rose from the dead to show the debt to be paid in full that all who believe in Him may stand in his righteousness. To stand in the status of “fully paid” and “not guilty.” When you come to realize the truth of the Gospel through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit in you, there is nothing else that one can do expect thank God and rejoice!

The promise to Abraham has come! This present age is the

age of grace marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nations and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the seal of our salvation!