

Introduction:

- Entering a new section – from defense of his ministry to defense of the message.
- Brief recap of previous section and introduction to this section.

I. Appeal to their own Christian Experience (vv. 1-4)

- a. Christ crucified: essential to what they first received. Over against what they have now heard (v. 1, cf. 1Cor 1:18-19, 2:2)
- b. Questions centered on the experience of their reception of the Spirit, elucidating: (vv. 2-5)
  - i. The incompatibility of both paths: Either one or the other
    1. Observances of the Law lined up with efforts of the flesh
    2. Hearing with faith lined up with the work of the Spirit
  - ii. The giving of the Spirit as (implied) validation of God's acceptance of their faith in the Gospel message (see also Acts 11:13-18, 15:12)
  - iii. The (implied) superiority of the work of The Spirit over efforts of the flesh

Short discussion: For some/many of us today who come to Christ and may not feel like we had such mind-blowing (memorable) experience associated with it, how can we still view our Christian life and experience in light of God's affirmation?

II. Appeal to the Scriptural (Historical) Precedent (vv. 5-9)

- a. Faith identifies with Abraham's narrative (vv. 5-7, cf. Gen 15:1-6)
  - i. Abraham's justification before God in Gen 15:1-6
  - ii. Faith, Abraham's family trait: 'Just As' Abraham – Like father, like children.
- b. Scripture's foresight: Inclusion by faith was NOT an afterthought! (vv. 8-9)
  - i. The Scripture foresaw: God will justify Gentiles and it will be by hearing in faith
  - ii. The Scripture proclaimed: the Gospel in advance to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18)

Short discussion: Paul shows that this Promise was not only about Abraham's (and Israel's) own blessings, but contained the Gospel in advance with all nations in mind. How does this knowledge that the inclusion of all ethnicities is according to the original blueprint impact your sense of belonging and belovedness with God?

III. Faith and Human Observances: Contrasting their Effectiveness (vv. 10-14)

- a. The Promise of Blessings vs. the Threat of a Curse (vv. 10, cf. Deut 27:26)
- b. Scriptural Hard Evidence for Justification: by Law Observance vs. by Faith (vv. 11-12, cf. Lev 18:5, Hab 2:4)
- c. Redeemed from Curse of the Law to Blessing of Abraham – – Back to Christ crucified! (vv. 13-14, refer back to v. 1:1, cf. Deut 21:23)

Suggestion for life application: This is really one exercise below, just broken down into steps:

Step 1: Think through and try to pinpoint one thing that has given you a sense of spiritual inadequacy in your Christian life – anything that may have made you fear for God's approval of you.

Step 2: Find a word or phrase that best describes that thing identified in Step 1 above.

Step 3: Take out a few minutes alone in prayer, and simply reaffirm to God your trust in the work of His Son Jesus Christ, and your desire to cast that [Step 2 word/phrase] upon His cross. Then request God to take from you the fear and feeling of inadequacy, freeing you to love and serve Him with freedom that is in Christ.