

Galatians 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Analysis

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Paul now shifts from experience to Scripture, quoting Genesis 15:6—the theological hinge of Romans 4 and Galatians 3. 'Believed' (episteusen, ἐπίστευσεν) is aorist, pointing to Abraham's decisive act of faith when God promised him innumerable offspring despite his childlessness. The verb 'accounted' (elogisthē, ἐλογίσθη) is an accounting term: 'reckoned, credited, imputed'—righteousness was placed to Abraham's account based solely on faith.

This is forensic justification: God declared Abraham righteous (a legal verdict) based on faith, not works. Abraham had no Law to keep (it came 430 years later, v. 17), no circumcision yet (Genesis 17, later), no religious pedigree—just naked faith in God's promise. The genitive 'for righteousness' (eis dikaiosynēn, εἰς δικαιοσύνην) indicates result: faith was counted **as** righteousness.

Paul's argument is devastating to the Judaizers: Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was justified by faith alone before circumcision, before the Law, by simple trust in God's word. If the patriarch himself was justified by faith, how can his children claim circumcision and Law-works are necessary? The gospel Paul preaches is the Abrahamic gospel.

Historical Context

Genesis 15:6 records Abraham's justification approximately 14 years before his circumcision (Genesis 17) and 430 years before the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:17). This chronology demolishes any argument that circumcision or Law-keeping are prerequisites for righteousness. Paul uses the same text in Romans 4:3-12 to argue that Abraham is the father of all who believe—circumcised and uncircumcised alike. The rabbis also revered Genesis 15:6 but interpreted Abraham's faith as meritorious works; Paul insists it was sheer trust, credited as righteousness by grace alone.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that Abraham's faith was 'accounted' or 'credited' as righteousness? How is this different from earned righteousness?
2. Why is the timing of Abraham's justification (before circumcision, before the Law) so crucial to Paul's argument against the Judaizers?
3. In what ways might you be trusting in your spiritual 'circumcision' (religious rituals, church membership, moral effort) rather than naked faith like Abraham's?

Interlinear Text

καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη
Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted
G2531 G11 G4100 G3588 G2316 G2532 G3049

αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.
to him for righteousness
G846 G1519 G1343

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 15:6 (Faith): And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

James 2:23 (Faith): And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Romans 4:24 (Faith): But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Galatians 3:9 (Faith): So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

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