

Galatians 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Analysis

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Paul personifies Scripture as an active agent that 'foresaw' (prouidousa, προῖδοῦσα)—literally 'seeing beforehand.' The participial phrase 'foreseeing that God would justify' reveals that justification by faith was not a New Testament innovation but the Old Testament plan all along. The verb 'justify' (dikairoi, δικαιοῖ) is present tense: God's ongoing justifying action is by faith, for Jew and Gentile alike.

The phrase 'preached before the gospel' (proeuēngelisato, προεσηγγελίσατο) is stunning—Paul uses the word 'gospelized' (εὐαγγελίζω) with the prefix pro- (before): Scripture pre-preached the good news to Abraham centuries before Christ. The gospel is ancient, not novel. The quote from Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 —'In thee shall all nations (ethnē, ἔθνη) be blessed'—reveals God's global plan to justify Gentiles by faith from the beginning.

This verse obliterates the Judaizer claim that Paul's law-free gospel was heretical novelty. The gospel of justification by faith, including Gentiles without circumcision, was announced to Abraham 2,000 years before Christ, embedded in the foundational promise of Genesis. Scripture itself is the evangelist, and the gospel is the Abrahamic promise fulfilled in Christ.

Historical Context

Genesis 12:3 (God's call of Abraham) and 22:18 (after the near-sacrifice of Isaac) both promise that 'all nations' (Hebrew *goyim*, Greek *ethnē*—Gentiles) would be blessed in Abraham. Jewish interpretation saw this as Israel's privilege spreading to Gentiles who would become proselytes; Paul sees the reverse—the blessing always included direct Gentile access to Abraham's God through faith. This promise grounds Paul's Gentile mission and explains why he insists circumcision is unnecessary—the original Abrahamic promise included uncircumcised Gentiles.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's argument that 'Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham' demonstrate the unity of Old and New Testament salvation (always by faith)?
2. What does it mean that God's plan to justify the Gentiles by faith was announced 2,000 years before Christ's coming? How does this strengthen your confidence in God's sovereign plan?
3. In what ways does the Abrahamic promise ('all nations blessed in you') still shape Christian mission and our understanding of God's global purposes today?

Interlinear Text

προϊδοῦσα	δὲ	ἡ	γραφὴ	ὅτι	ἐκ	πίστεως
foreseeing	And	G3588	the scripture	saying	through	faith
G4275	G1161		G1124	G3754	G1537	G4102
δικαιοῖ	τὰ	ἔθνη·	ὁ	θεὸς	προεηγγελίσατο	τῷ
would justify	G3588	nations	G3588	God	preached before the gospel	G3588
G1344		G1484		G2316	G4283	
Ἀβραὰμ	ὅτι	Ἐνευλογηθήσονται	ἐν	σοὶ	πάντα	τὰ
unto Abraham	saying	be blessed	In	thee	all	G3588
G11	G3754	G1757	G1722	G4671	G3956	
ἔθνη·						
nations						
G1484						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 12:3 (Blessing): And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 22:18 (Blessing): And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 28:14 (Blessing): And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 26:4 (Blessing): And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Genesis 18:18 (Blessing): Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Galatians 3:22 (Faith): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Hebrews 4:2 (Faith): For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

John 7:38 (Faith): He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Genesis 49:10 (Word): The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Galatians 3:16 (References Abraham): Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.