

## WHY SO MUCH FOCUS ON ABRAHAM?

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In Galatians 3, Paul turns to the argument from scripture, and the focus of the argument is on Abraham. Why Abraham? Because he wants to answer the question, Who are the children of Abraham? But, at this juncture in church history, we may find ourselves asking, So what? What's the big deal about being the children of Abraham?

The reason we fail to appreciate the significance of Paul's argument here is because we fail to grasp the over-arching story of the Bible. Since we don't get the plot we can't make sense of individual scenes.

At the risk of over-simplification, permit me to summarize the plot and where Abraham fits. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth, the creatures, and man himself was good. Everything was good. But man rebelled against God, severing the bond between God, man, and creation which brought order and shalom to creation. Man stood guilty and condemned. And God's good creation turned into a shipwreck as alienation and attack replaced harmony and shalom.

Nevertheless, God's not one to give up easily. And he had a plan to redeem, reconcile, and restore mankind and all of creation. It was a messy plan, one that would require God getting his boots muddy and his hands dirty, but he was committed to his universe and the people in it. Since people were the epicenter of the problem and since they were the crown of his now-ruined creation, his solution would have to come through them. He'd have to work with people and through people to redeem, reconcile, and restore the world to himself.

And so, he chose a human—Abraham—and promised that he'd be the father of the solution-people. The children (descendants) of Abraham are the people of the solution. They are the ones blessed by God to bring God's blessing to the whole earth.

Here's how God stated it when He first called Abraham:

1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:1-3).

And in spite of repeated failures on their part and ongoing rebellion and disloyalty, God stuck with the plan, so that through the people of Abraham He should bring the blessing of his rescue and salvation to the whole earth.

So why Abraham in Galatians 3? Because Abraham and his people are the main characters in the story. It is through Abraham God's people are named; it is through Abraham and his descendants that the plan to redeem, reconcile, and restore all of creation is realized.

The problem however, is...

Abraham's descendants recapitulated the sin of Adam; they disobeyed God, broke faith with Him, and violated His covenant. They were part of the problem rather than the solution. And now they are under a curse ... the curse of exile for breaking their covenant with God.

How then will God fulfill his promises to Abraham?

It is this narrative framework that underlies Galatians 3.