

## **The Identity and Means of Inclusion into the New Covenant People of God: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 3:1–9**

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### **Abstract**

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Galatians is at the heart of Pauline theology concerning justification by faith, an antithesis to righteousness that comes through the works of the law. Galatians discusses justification by faith alone as the means of inclusion into the new covenant people of God. This study employs a historical-grammatical approach to interpret Galatians 3:1–9 and explores its possible application. It also examines the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) concerning covenantal nomism and works righteousness theology (legalism). The main argumentation in the text is that acceptance before God or inclusion into the new covenant people of God is only by faith, with no addition or subtraction. The Spirit is a primary identity marker for those who have been accepted by God by faith in Christ Jesus. Gentiles have become members of Abraham's family of faith since they have believed just as Abraham believed, thus God's people. The blessing given to Abraham has now come to the believing Gentiles through Christ.

**Keywords:** Covenant People of God, Justification by Faith, Judaizers, Works of the Law, Blessings through Christ, New Perspective on Paul (NPP), Covenantal Nomism

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### **Introduction**

The book of Galatians is key in understanding Pauline's theology of justification by faith as the means of inclusion into the new covenant people of God. Galatians 3: 1–9 is the center of what Paul teaches in the letter. Commenting on the block of independent discourse unit, Galatians 3: 1–4:11, within which Galatians 3: 1–9 fits, Longenecker and Metzger observe that this section is the most decisive in the letter to the Galatians because argumentation proofs concerning Paul's assertions in chapters one and two of Galatians are found in the



section.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, essential to pay attention to Galatians 3: 1–9. Galatians is considered part of the greatest and the most influential owing to its focus on the doctrine of justification by faith in a context where there was insistence by the Judaizers that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised for completeness in being part of God’s people.<sup>2</sup> The particular text in this study would be critical in understanding Paul’s theological framework and thinking and determining the nature of Paul’s concern.

One of the critical and core issues that marked the pattern of religion in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism is the law (Torah) and the covenant.<sup>3</sup> The issue of the law or Torah observance in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Judaism is always treated as works of righteousness or legalism, both corporate and individual. Several scholars traditionally accept that this was the theological heresy, the Galatian heresy, that Paul had in view as he wrote to the church in Galatia. Scholars such as E. P. Sanders, N. T. Wright, James D. G. Dunn, and others have championed a new system dubbed the New Perspective on Paul (NPP).<sup>4</sup> This new perspective is based on a term coined by Sanders known as “Covenantal Nomism.”<sup>5</sup> As argued by Sanders, the real theological context of 1<sup>st</sup>-century Judaism was not so much about legalism or works of righteousness as traditionally held. Instead, it was about a practice that emphasizes the belief that an individual gains access or inclusion into the Abrahamic covenant by being a descendant of Abraham by birth. Given this assertion, it is considered that the way of remaining in the covenant is through Torah observance. Sanders defines Covenantal Nomism as “The understanding that one’s place in God’s plan is established based on the covenant and that the covenant requires, as the proper response of man, his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression.”<sup>6</sup> The other assertion that Sanders rightly makes is that the 1<sup>st</sup> century Rabbinic Judaism was not bereft of grace; the Jews generally recognized that their corporate election as the nation of Israel was an act of God’s grace.<sup>7</sup> Understanding the theological context of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine Judaism is critical to the text under consideration as it acts as a window through which one interacts with the religious world of Paul at the time of writing to the Galatians.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard N. Longenecker and Bruce Manning Metzger, *Galatians*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Nachdr., Word Biblical Commentary [General Ed.: David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament Ed.: Ralph P. Martin], Vol. 41 (Waco, Tex: Word Books, Publ, 2006), 97.

<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1983), 587.

<sup>3</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 238–42.

<sup>4</sup> Keener, 242–44.

<sup>5</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, 1st Paperback Edition (Fortress Press, 1977), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Sanders, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Keener, *Galatians*, 238–42.

In this debate of works righteousness (merit theology) vs. covenantal nomism, Keener makes a very helpful observation that there was a variety in earlier Judaism that pointed to both grace and necessity of Torah observance. To this end, he points out that systematic consistency on this issue would be untannable.<sup>8</sup> For this paper, the view that has been adopted is that either of the two possible theological contexts, as discussed herein, covenantal nomism or works righteousness-legalism, would still fit within the rubric of the Galatian heresy. Justification by faith is the only way to salvation.

### **Background of the Text**

As pointed out by Keener, becoming part of the people of God for the Jews, and more so the Pharisees, meant following the laws given to Noah or the Mosaic requirements.<sup>9</sup> It is on this basis that the Judaizing Christians, borrowing from a history of ethnic religion, required the converts to Judaism, proselytes, to also adopt Israelites' heritage and practices like circumcision.<sup>10</sup> The prominent concern was the Jewish and Gentile divide.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Literary Context***

Galatians 3:1–9 falls within the larger discourse unit, Galatians 3:1—4:31, which is regarded as a doctrinal section where Paul puts forth a reasoned case for his gospel of justification by faith and not by the law. The doctrinal section, Galatian 3:6—4:7, is sandwiched between two appeal sections, 3:1–5 as the introduction and 4:8–31 at the tail end. The section preceding Galatians 3:1–9 and Galatians 1:1—2:21 dealt with Paul's defense concerning the authenticity of the gospel he preached and his apostleship. The doctrinal section, as highlighted, is followed by a call-to-action section as common to Pauline letters, Galatians 5:1—6: 10, and a conclusion section, Galatians 6:11–18.

#### **Translation**

*1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes was Jesus Christ publicly portrayed as having been crucified? 2 This only I wish to learn from you, did you receive the Spirit by works of [the] law, or by [the] hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain- if indeed it was in vain? 5 Therefore, the [One] supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you, [does he do it] by [the] works of [the] law, or by the hearing of faith. 6*

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<sup>8</sup> Keener, 242.

<sup>9</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 524.

<sup>10</sup> Keener, *Galatians*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, ed., *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1206.

*Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. 7 Know, then, that those of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 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.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.<sup>12</sup>*

### **Exegesis of Galatians 3:1–9**

#### ***The Spirit and Miracle that You Received by the Hearing of Faith is Enough (Vv. 1–5)***

To capture the graveness of the point at issue in Galatians, Paul adopts a very strong and dramatic language towards his audience, as demonstrated by the opening phrase, Ὡ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται (O foolish Galatians!) to capture the tone assumed by the author and the emphasis of his addressees.

Paul employs rhetorical skills to make sense of the strongly worded opening phrase. The first of these questions is τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν, (Who has bewitched/cast a spell over/evil eye on you?). The word ἐβάσκανεν has only been used here in the entire NT. In this question, the aorist verb ἐβάσκανεν<sup>13</sup> takes a resultative shade with an emphasis on the result or effect of the action. On this word ἐβάσκανεν, it is possible, theologically and contextually, that Paul has an evil spirit in view here as the force behind the bewitching. However, leaning towards deception or leading a stray in light of the context is more sensible. As such, Paul is using the word ἐβάσκανεν<sup>14</sup> in a metaphorical sense in reference to the Galatian heresy that compelled the believing Gentiles to practice the Jewish cultures concerning circumcision and food rituals as a means of becoming complete or full members of the people of God. Schreiner notes that Paul is simply using a common daily coinage at the time to express his bewilderment at the Galatians.<sup>15</sup> For Paul, what happened among the Galatians can only be possible under deceptive influence. The UBS 4<sup>th</sup> edition<sup>16</sup> has a variant here compared to the Nestle Aland 27<sup>th</sup> edition.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This is my own translation from the Greek text (The UBS Greek New Testament: Greek Bible text, A Reader's ed., 4. rev. ed).

<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that Paul uses this indicative aorist active verb in its 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form.

<sup>14</sup> William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1993), 114 and 156.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 9 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2010), 199.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Aland and Barclay M. Newman, eds., *The UBS Greek New Testament: Greek Bible text, A Reader's ed., 4. rev. ed., [Nachdr.]* (Stuttgart: Dt. Bibelges, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> A few manuscripts used in the UBS 4<sup>th</sup> edition contained the phrase *τη ἀληθεια μη πειθεσθαι* translated as, "... that you should not obey the truth."

The second question that Paul asks is, *οἷς κατ' ὀφθαλμοῦς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένος*; translated as, (Before whose eyes was Jesus Christ publicly portrayed as having been crucified?). The pronoun *οἷς* serves as a dative of indirect object in relation to the Galatians, and the accusative *ὀφθαλμοῦς* serves as a direct object receiving the action of the verb *προεγράφη* which is an aorist in the constative shade. The aorist verb *προεγράφη* is modified by the circumstantial participle *ἐσταυρωμένος*, which is an expression of the manner in which *προεγράφη*, public portrayal, happened. As such, *ἐσταυρωμένος* here functions modally, and *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς* is the subject of the verb *προεγράφη*.

The word *προεγράφη* from *προγράφω* occurs thrice, in Romans 15: 4, Ephesians 3:3, and here in Galatians 3:1, and it could mean 'to write beforehand,' 'to make a subject public notice,' 'declare publicly,' or 'publicly portray.'<sup>18</sup> In Romans 15: 4 (*προεγράφη* and *ἐγράφη*) and Ephesians 3:3 (*προέγραψα*), the word carries the idea of writing beforehand, while in the context of Galatians 3:1, the word connotes a public notice, declaration or portrayal. Drawing from the context of Galatians and the point at issue in the text, the possible inference that can be made is that Paul has the public declaration or portrayal of the gospel of Christ crucified in view here.<sup>19</sup> As such, Paul asserts that the Galatians do not have an excuse since Christ Jesus was publicly portrayed before their eyes as having been crucified; through this gospel, they found their identity and gained inclusion into the new covenant people of God.

To single out the particular issue of concern here, Paul begins his sentence in verse 2 with an accusative demonstrative pronoun *τοῦτο* as the direct object of the present aoristic verb *θέλω*. The adverb *μόνον* marks the particularity of the issue. The infinitive aorist *μαθεῖν* is used adverbially by Paul as an expression of purpose, and the personal pronoun in the genitive case *ὑμῶν* together with the preposition *ἀφ'* is used ablatively as a genitive of separation to express the idea that Paul's addressees are the source of the information he is in his rhetorical question. Consequently, the phrase *τοῦτο μόνον θέλω μαθεῖν ἀφ' ὑμῶν* translated as, "This only I wish to learn from you," marks out the rhetorical question that follows in verse 2 as central to Paul's argumentation. The point at issue in this verse, which is critical to the identity and inclusion into the new covenant people of God, is how the Galatians received the Spirit (*τὸ πνεῦμα*). Longenecker<sup>20</sup> and Keener<sup>21</sup> point out that Paul's argument in this verse does not in any way refute the fact that the Galatians had received the Spirit; it only calls them to reflect on the basis upon which they received the Spirit. On this point, it is clear

<sup>18</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 390.

<sup>19</sup> Scholars such as Longenecker, Oakes, Moo, Schreiner, and McCreight et al.

<sup>20</sup> Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 41, Galatians*, 392.

<sup>21</sup> Keener, *Galatians*, 206.

that the Spirit was such an obvious marker of the Galatian faith that Paul did not expect them to refute. The reference to the Galatian experience of the Spirit is particularly important as Paul seeks to affirm that their salvation is authentic and that they do not need to add anything to it to be complete in Christ as members of the new covenant people of God. Schreiner observes, “The reference to the Spirit confirms that the conversion of the Galatians is in view, for the Spirit is the sign that one belongs to the people of God.”<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that at the council of Jerusalem,<sup>23</sup> Peter asserts that God’s acceptance of the Gentiles was marked by them receiving the Holy Spirit just as the Jews did; by this, the Gentiles became Christians and gained inclusion into the commonwealth of God’s people. To this end, the reference to the Galatians’ experience of the Spirit does not only have soteriological implications but also anthropological and ecclesiological; the global perspective of the church as the community of God’s people not bound by race, tribe, or ethnicity is marked by the seal of the Holy Spirit as the witness.

To build up his argumentation on how the Galatians received the Spirit, Paul uses the prepositional phrases ἐξ<sup>24</sup> ἔργων νόμου and ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως in a contrasting manner to note that ἔργων νόμου is antithetical to ἀκοῆς πίστεως. In this paper, ἔργων νόμου, translated as “works of the law,” is considered to fit within the two possible 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism contextual framework of covenantal nomism identity markers, dietary laws, sabbath observance, and circumcision, and Torah observance as a means of meritorious favor before God. This position considers both covenantal nomism and legalism as part of the Galatian heresy that Paul speaks against in the letter. This is in agreement with Longenecker’s observation that the Judaizers’ nomistic stances resulted in legalism and that it was antithetical to ἀκοῆς πίστεως.<sup>25</sup> The genitives ἔργων and ἀκοῆς in the prepositional phrases ἐξ ἔργων and ἐξ ἀκοῆς are used by Paul in the context of this text to describe the means in relationship to how the Galatians received the Spirit. However, what does Paul have in view in his usage of the words ἀκοῆς and πίστεως, and what is the genitive relationship between the two words? The word ἀκοῆς, as used by Paul, carries more than one possible meaning, depending on whether one translates it from an active or passive sense, as observed by Ridderbos.<sup>26</sup> The position

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 199.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 15:8; cf. 10:44–48.

<sup>24</sup> The preposition ἐξ as used in v.2 has the following possible translation depending on the context and the noun case, away from, from, out of or by.

<sup>25</sup> Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 41, Galatians*, 370.

<sup>26</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Wm. B. Eerdmans-Lightning Source, 1953), 100–101.

assumed in this paper is an active sense, meaning either the act or the sense of hearing (ἀκοῆς, ἀκοή, and ἀκοῆ) as in Romans 10:17, 2 Peter 2:8, and 1 Corinthians 12.<sup>27</sup> The word *πίστεως*, as used in the text, could also carry more than one possible meaning. It could mean faith, belief, and firm persuasion or trust;<sup>28</sup> faithfulness, truthfulness;<sup>29</sup> ground of belief and assurance.<sup>30</sup> In a majority of places in the NT,<sup>31</sup> *πίστις* carries the idea of faith or trust; this is the position of this paper.

For the relationship between the two genitives (ἀκοῆς *πίστεω*), several possibilities can be explored based on what has been discussed so far. Given the context of Galatian 3:1–9 and what Paul instructs in Romans 10:16b–17,<sup>32</sup> where the word ἀκοῆς has been variedly used, the position assumed in this paper is that Paul uses ἀκοῆς in reference to the act of hearing. The noun *πίστεως* is an objective genitive in relationship to ἀκοῆς.<sup>33</sup> Now, considering the two words together ἀκοῆς *πίστεως*, a literal translation, “hearing of faith,” would fit the objective genitive view, that is, faith in Christ is considered to be in view as the means of receiving the Spirit and gaining inclusion into the new covenant people of God. Therefore, the rhetorical question can be rendered as, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing of faith?”

Verse 3 begins with the adverb οὕτως, translated as “so” in the context of this verse. The adverb functions as a modifier of the adjective ἀνόητοι, which serves as a predicate nominative because of the verb ἐστε, which is a form of εἶμι verb and expresses a state of being. As such, the predicate nominative ἀνόητοι completes the action of the subject “you” (2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural) in the present durative tense ἐστε; which indicates that the state of being foolish (ἀνόητοι) started in the past and is continuing in the time of Paul’s writing. As such, the rendering of the rhetorical question οὕτως ἀνόητοι ἐστε in English is, “Are you so foolish?” This hard-hitting rhetorical question would only make the Galatians retrace their steps. It is worth noting that Paul uses this adjective in reference to the Galatians for the second time. In verse 1, Paul uses the adjective ἀνόητοι as a statement of fact, while in this verse, he uses it as a retort in a rhetorical sense.

<sup>27</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 59.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:1

<sup>29</sup> Romans 3:3 and Galatians 5:22

<sup>30</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 375.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 8:10; 9:2, 22 and 29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21; Mark 2:5; 4:40; 5:34; 10:52; 11:22; Luke 5:20; 7:9 and 50; 8:25 and 48; 17:5-6 and 19; Acts 3:16 etc.

<sup>32</sup> Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει, Κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; 17 ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἢ δὲ ἀκοή διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ.

<sup>33</sup> This is the position favoured by Moo, Wright, Fesko, and Schreiner. Keener, Longenecker, Oakes, McCreight et al, Gupta and McKnight assumes a passive sense of ἀκοῆς rendered as what is heard or announced, the message or tidings.

In the second question in this verse, the aorist participle *ἐναρξάμενοι* is used as an antecedent to the action of the main verb *ἐπιτελεῖσθε* which is a present tense in the descriptive shade; a simple description of what is happening from Paul's perspective. He also uses the dative of agent *πνεύματι*.<sup>34</sup> This choice is guided by the aorist, participle, middle verb *ἐναρξάμενοι* and the theological sense that *πνεύματι* is a person. In contrast to the Spirit (*πνεῦματι*), Paul uses the word *σαρκὶ*. In this verse, the word is used as a dative of means in relationship to the action of the verb *ἐπιτελεῖσθε*.

Consequently, the rendering of *ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε*; would be, “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Just like in verse 2, where Paul appealed to the Galatians' experience of the Spirit, Paul here again wants to make it clear to them that the beginning of their Christian life or inclusion into the new covenant people of God was by Spirit and that it would be antithetical to be perfected in the flesh. In reference to Isaiah 32:15; 44:3, Ezekiel 11:18–19; 36:26–27, and Joel 2:28, Schreiner refers to the *πνεύματι* in Galatians as the “eschatological Spirit of promise,”<sup>35</sup> that marks out the people of God (the addition is mine). For Paul, the Galatians are deviating from their divine roots, which were by the Spirit, to something else through the means of the flesh. However, what does Paul have in view here by the use of the word *σαρκὶ*? Drawing from the point at issue that Paul is grappling with in this letter, *σαρκὶ* would contextually be a representation of the human action, that which in a broad sense is referred to as *ἔργων νόμου* in verse 2. The perfection by the flesh could also be in reference to the demand by the Judaizers that Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and practice other Jewish laws to attain some maturity or completion of conversion and full inclusion into the new covenant people of God. While *σαρκὶ* has been used in a broader sense to represent human sinful or adamic nature in many instances in the NT, the position assumed in this paper is that Paul has used *σαρκὶ* in the context of this verse and Galatians specifically in reference to the Judaizers push concerning Torah observance. It would include circumcision and any other Jewish ethnicity-related rituals, human efforts, or legalistic works of righteousness. For Paul, the Spirit and not the flesh is both the beginning and the completion as far as the inclusion into the new covenant people of God is concerned.

In verse 4, Paul asks, “Did you suffer so many things in vain- if indeed it was in vain?” The aorist indicative verb *ἐπάθετε* is constative, focusing on the action as a whole. At the same time, the demonstrative pronoun *τοσαῦτα* in accusative case serves as the object, and

<sup>34</sup> Dative of means or sphere could also be in view here.

<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 2010, 202.



the adverb εἰκῆ as the modifier of the verb ἐπάθετε. The verb ἐπάθετε, drawn from πάσχω, can have the following possible meanings: to be affected by something either positively or negatively, thus connoting having an experience of something; it could also mean to suffer or endure.<sup>36</sup> The first possible meaning informs the NIV, NLT, NRS, CEB, GNT, RSV, and NRSV rendering of the verb as, “Did you experience.” Versions such as ESV, KJV, ASV, and NKJV render ἐπάθετε as “suffer.” The Galatians’ experience could refer to suffering because of the faith that characterized Paul’s missionary engagements and the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Paul’s ministry entailed suffering (Acts 9:16), and the early church believers also experienced hostility from the surrounding pagan context (Acts 13:50; 16:22–24).<sup>37</sup>

The lack of direct evidence of Galatians’ suffering notwithstanding, George, citing Acts 13:14, observes that it is not unreasonable to perceive that the Galatians would have been subject to the same kind of persecution that Paul and Barnabas suffered in their first missionary journey to the people in the region of Galatia.<sup>38</sup> The position that Paul has suffered in view here by his usage of the word ἐπάθετε is supported by Fowler<sup>39</sup> and Moo,<sup>40</sup> while Longenecker<sup>41</sup> and Schreiner<sup>42</sup> basing their argument on the point that words draw their meaning from the context favours the “Did you experience...” rendering.<sup>43</sup> The experience here refers to Paul’s arguments in verses 2–3. In this divide of context and etymological perspective in the usage of the word ἐπάθετε in the NT, we considered the etymological persuasion, thus adopting the point that Paul has suffered in view here. The point here is that their suffering would be in vain if justification or inclusion into the new covenant people of God would be by works of the law and faith.

Verse 5 is the logical conclusion of Paul’s argumentation hinged on the Galatians’ experience. This assertion is supported by Paul’s usage of the conjunction “οὖν,” which can be rendered as “Therefore, thus, then, so, or consequently.” As such, Paul is calling the attention of the Galatians to his points, as argued in verses. 1–4, and more specifically, in verse 2. In the last rhetorical question in this verse, Paul uses the present participles ἐπιχορηγῶν and ἐνεργῶν to express that their actions are simultaneous to the action of the

<sup>36</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 361.

<sup>37</sup> Elkanah K. Cheboi, *Crucified and Cursed Christ: An Analysis of Galatians 3:1–14 in the Context of Curses in Biblical Times and Its Relevance to Marakwet Culture*. (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham, 2023), 80.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians*, *The New American Commentary / Gen. Ed. David S. Dockery* 30 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 241.

<sup>39</sup> James A. Fowler, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: The Gospel Versus Religion*, First Edition (C I Y Publishing, 2011), 94.

<sup>40</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 184–85.

<sup>41</sup> Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 41, Galatians*, 274–75.

<sup>42</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 2010, 202–4.

<sup>43</sup> Ridderbos, Keener, Fesko and Oakes supports also supports the suffered position.

main verb, which is missing. Because of this, the verb *ποιεω* (he does) is supplied; in other translations such as NIV, NLT, NRS, and GNT, the subject implied by the present participles *ἐπιχορηγῶν* and *ἐνεργῶν*, and represented by the third person pronoun, “he” is rendered overtly as *θεός*, “God.” It must also be noted that present participles *ἐπιχορηγῶν* and *ἐνεργῶν*, which are governed by the same article *ὁ*, function substantivally.<sup>44</sup> The personal pronoun *ὑμῖν* is used in this context as a dative of indirect object in relationship to the verbs *ἐπιχορηγῶν* and *ἐνεργῶν* respectively and *πνεῦμα* and *δυνάμεις* as the direct objects in the accusative case; because of the preposition *ἐν*, the second dative *ὑμῖν* is translated as, “among you.” In this verse, Paul reminds the Galatians not only about the Spirit but also of God’s miraculous outworking in their life, as represented by the word *δυνάμεις*.

Just like in verse 2, the prepositional phrases *ἐξ ἔργων νόμου* and *ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως* function in the same manner, showing that *ἔργων νόμου* is antithetical to *ἀκοῆς πίστεως*. For the second time, Paul reminds the Galatians not only of their conversion and inclusion into the new covenant people of God but also of the miracles of God among them. They need to remember that these were *ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως* and not by any form of human activity, whether legalism (works righteousness) or covenantal nomism. From the argumentation in this section, it is clear that the Spirit and its experience is a primary identity marker of conversion or belonging to the new covenant people of God. As rightly observed by Schreiner,<sup>45</sup> for Paul, the Galatians’ experience is a testament that they have become members of the people of God. In this, the Spirit and the evidence of God’s miraculous outworking in the lives of the Galatians are irrefutable facts that Paul uses as a defense for his position concerning the identity and means of inclusion into the New Covenant people of God.

### **The Gentiles have Become Members of Abraham’s Family by Faith (vv. 6–9)**

Verse 6 begins with an adverb *καθὼς* translated as “Just as,” at the beginning of this verse may be viewed as functioning in different ways. First, it may be viewed as a conjunction between what was said in the previous verse and what is contained in this verse; therefore, it acts as an introduction to a point of comparison in view of Paul’s argumentation in verses 2–5. Second, it could be taken as a beginning or introduction to the quotation from Genesis 15:6. Third, as observed by Longenecker, it could also be viewed as an exemplum reference,

<sup>44</sup> The two participles act as the noun in the sentence and also refers to the same person, in this case, God; this construction (*ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν*) meets the Granville Sharp rule/theory construction, two participles of the same case (*ἐπιχορηγῶν* and *ἐνεργῶν* both in the nominative case) connected by *καὶ* and the article *ὁ* only preceding the first participle *ἐπιχορηγῶν*. To this end, the latter participle *ἐνεργῶν* refers to the same person as the former *ἐπιχορηγῶν*. This is the view adopted by Longenecker and Schreiner

<sup>45</sup> Schreiner, 205.

thus making the rendering “Take Abraham as the example.”<sup>46</sup> In this paper, however, it is considered that *καθὼς* has a loose connection with Paul’s argumentation in verses 2–5, more so on the expected answer by the Galatians to Paul’s rhetorical questions. In both instances, the answer would have been “ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. As such, *καθὼς* is both introducing the new section that focuses on Abraham, an argument from the Scripture and also loosely making a connection with what Paul had argued in earlier verses. Further, *καθὼς* is also a modifier of the constative aorist ἐπίστευσεν translated as he/she/it believed; because this is in reference to Ἀβραάμ, he believed is appropriate.<sup>47</sup> In this verse, αὐτῷ is a dative of advantage translated as “to him.” δικαιοσύνην serves as an adverbial accusative modifying the verb ἐλογίσθη with the focus on the goal of ἐλογίσθη because of the preposition εἰς. The word ἐλογίσθη is drawn from λογίζομαι that carries the following possible meanings: count, calculate, enumerate, reckon or number,<sup>48</sup> to impute, regard, deem, infer, or presume.<sup>49</sup> The idea here is not about Abraham’s faithfulness but rather trust or faith in God; because of this, he was considered or regarded as righteous by God. In the context of Galatians, divine righteousness is in view by Paul. Thus, the rendering of v.6, καθὼς Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην would be, “Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Paul’s appeal to Abraham is vital as the Judaizers held Abraham as the standard of covenant obedience. As rightly observed by Schreiner, there is a sense in which the Jewish tradition emphasizes Abraham’s obedience rather than faith.<sup>50</sup> This is the perspective that is captured in 1 Maccabees 2:52 Sirach 44:19–21, in particular, sees Abraham as the greatest patriarch for keeping “*the law of the Most High* (v.20).” At the same time, the Jews recognized Abraham as the prototype of covenant obedience as marked by circumcision, Paul in this Galatian text citing Genesis 15:6<sup>51</sup> puts more emphasis on Abraham’s faith or trust in God; thus, concluding that Abraham believed God and building on that to urge the Galatians to keep the faith as the path of acceptance or inclusion into the new covenant people of God. Abraham demonstrated this trust and faith in God before the Sinaitic covenant inaugurated the Torah.<sup>52</sup> This trust in God and God’s promises was a distinctive feature of Abraham even

<sup>46</sup> Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 41, Galatians*, 280.

<sup>47</sup> τῷ θεῷ is a dative of direct object translated as, “God,” and ἐλογίσθη a constative aorist translated as, “he/she/it was accounted/counted/credited.”

<sup>48</sup> Mark 15: 28 (ἐλογίσθη); Luke 22:37 (ἐλογίσθη).

<sup>49</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 302.

<sup>50</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 2010, 213.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Romans 4: 1–3.

<sup>52</sup> Just like in Romans, Gupta, Schreiner, Longenecker, Moo and Keener agree that Paul’s wider focus here is on the sufficiency and transformative power of faith as demonstrated by Abraham.

before the covenant between him and God was instituted (*see Genesis 17*). Through Paul's appeal to the Abraham text in Genesis 15:6, the Judaizers can see the justifying faith before circumcision as the means of inclusion into the new covenant people of God, making the circumcision requirement for Galatians ridiculous. For Paul, faith and not human obedience or covenantal nomism is the means of acceptance before God or inclusion into the new covenant people of God. This Abrahamic illustration is contextually essential, considering that the Jews regarded themselves as the descendants of Abraham by blood and, thus, the people of God. Paul's perspective in this verse redefines the reading of Genesis 15:6 in the new covenant context as it explores how Abraham is an example of faith (belief) in God in the new era inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

In verse 7, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Paul notes in this verse, *Γινώσκετε*- you know- present imperative expressing an entreaty. The present imperative verb is followed by the conjunctions *ἄρα*, translated as 'then' and *ὅτι*, translated as 'that.' The prepositional phrase *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* could be rendered in several ways. First, in the phrase, the preposition *ἐκ* could denote source, source of character as opposed to source of being. As such, the rendering would be "Those whose character is derived from faith." Second, *πίστεως* could also be looked at from a subjective and objective genitive perspective. In the context of the text under consideration, the objective genitive perspective of *πίστεως* is favored in this paper because it is considered that Paul has in view here those who believed just as Abraham believed; That is, "sons of Abraham" exercised faith.

The article *οἱ* in the prepositional phrase *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* (those of faith) is substantival, serving as a noun. In the phrase *οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσὶν Ἀβραάμ*, the nominative *υἱοὶ* serves as a predicate nominative as guided by the copulative verb *εἰσιν*, which is a durative present tense. *Ἀβραάμ* is a genitive of relationship with regards to the head noun *υἱοὶ*. This whole verse is therefore rendered as, "Know, then, that those of faith, these are sons of Abraham." Just like in Galatians 3:2, a literal translation is favored here. Paul asserts in this verse that this is the opposite of what the Jews believed, as they considered Abraham their patriarch and believed that they were the only true sons of Abraham, who were connected to Abraham ethnically by blood. This perspective might have informed the Judaizers' demand for the Galatians to be circumcised and observe the Torah to be fully included in the people of God. Yet in line with Paul's argumentation, both the Gentiles and the Jews who are *ἐκ πίστεως* are considered *υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ* (sons of Abraham). The identity marker of the sons of Abraham in God's grand story of salvation history is not ethnic in nature, demanding circumcision, Torah observance, and

other Jewish traditions. Rather, it is marked by faith. This is the entreaty or plea that Paul gives in this verse as represented by the present imperative verb *Γινώσκετε*.

In verse 8 *γραφῆ*, the nominative subject refers to a passage of Scripture.<sup>53</sup> The aorist participle *προϊδοῦσα* is likely functioning adverbially here with respect to the main verb *προεσηγγερίσατο*; thus, it is considered as functioning circumstantially in a causal sense expressing the basis of the action of the main verb *προεσηγγερίσατο. πίστεως*. The prepositional phrase *ἐκ πίστεως* serves as the genitive of means explaining how *θεὸς* (subject-nominative) *δικαιοῖ* (present tense-descriptive) the ἔθνη (Gentiles/nations- accusative functioning as direct object). The dative *τῷ Ἀβραάμ* serves as the dative of indirect object, and *ἐν σοὶ* could be viewed as serving as the dative of agent as guided by the passive verb *ἐνευλογηθήσονται*. However, in this paper, we consider *ἐν σοὶ* as serving as the dative of sphere in a figurative sense to mean the agent of *ἐνευλογηθήσονται*, future-predictive since God's promises always come conversion to pass. Hays' perspective with regards to *ἐν σοὶ* is that Paul has Abraham's faithfulness in view here.<sup>54</sup> However, while it is true that Abraham's faith has a redemptive-historical feature, it must be appreciated that in light of Galatians 3: 6, where emphasis is put on *ἐπίστευσεν*, the meaning of *ἐκ πίστεως* would be faith rather than faithfulness. The conjunction *δὲ*, though not translated, is very important as it connects verse 8 to verse 7, which also has a connection with verse 6. It is also worth noting that Paul is using *γραφῆ* here as doing the action of the main verb *προεσηγγερίσατο*, in a figurative sense; *γραφῆ* is personified.

The word ἔθνη is a significant theme not just in the NT but also in the OT. The Hebrew word equivalent for ἔθνη in the OT is *אֻמָּה* (transliterated as *ummah*). In the OT, the word carries a connotation for a collection or community of people, often translated as nations.<sup>55</sup> The other word in the OT that would also have a relationship with NT ἔθνη is *גוֹי* (transliterated as *gowy*). The word is used primarily to reference a group of people or nations.<sup>56</sup> It also marks out non-Israelites, the Gentiles.<sup>57</sup> In the NT, the word ἔθνη is used in an eschatological and missiological sense as a representation of people from all families, races, and tribes of the world.<sup>58</sup> It also refers to non-Israelites, those considered as outsiders

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<sup>53</sup> Matthew 21:42 (*γραφαῖς*); 22: 29 (*γραφάς*); Mark 15:28 (*γραφῆ*); Luke 4: 21 (*γραφῆ*); John 7:38 (*γραφῆ*); Acts 1:16 (*γραφῆν*).

<sup>54</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, 2nd edition (Dearborn, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans-Lightning Source, 2002), 203–6.

<sup>55</sup> Ezra 4:10; Daniel 3:4, 7, and 29; 4:1; 5: 19; 6:25; 7: 14

<sup>56</sup> Genesis 10:5, 20, 31–32; 12: 2; 17: 4–6; Micah 4:2–3.

<sup>57</sup> Genesis 14: 1 and 9; Deuteronomy 28:1.

<sup>58</sup> Matthew 25:32; 28: 19; Mark 13:10; Revelation 11:18; 12: 5; 14:8; 15: 4; 17: 15; 18: 3 and 23; 20: 18; 21: 24

and not belonging not just to the ethnic Israelites but also to the commonwealth of God's people.<sup>59</sup> In this verse, Paul's usage of the word ἔθνη captures the two perspectives, i.e., the first ἔθνη representing the Gentiles and the second one in the Genesis 12:3 and 18:18 quotation representing all the families (תְּהֵאֲשֵׁרָה) of the earth or nations (הַגּוֹיִם or אֲרָצוֹת). In this verse, Paul uses another set of OT texts, Genesis 12:3 and 18:18, concerning the Abrahamic covenant blessing promises, particularly the blessing of all nations. For Paul, the gospel of justification by faith was preached beforehand, and as such, the nations have now received this blessing, the new covenant membership blessing, by faith and not works of the law.

Drawing from verse 8, Paul, in verse 9, concludes this section using the conjunction ὥστε, translated as "So then," as the connector of what he said in verse 8 to his conclusion in verse 9. Paul's interpretation of the Abraham narrative and his focus particularly on Genesis 15: 6, πίστεως in the prepositional phrase οἱ ἐκ πίστεως is considered as an objective genitive with respect to the article οἱ. The verb ἐβλογοῦνται, rendered as "are blessed," could be present tense passive-durative or gnomic/customary since it is an expression of a standard. τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ serves as a dative of association with a binding factor or means of association with οἱ ἐκ πίστεως being verb ἐβλογοῦνται. The dative adjective τῷ πιστῷ could mean the believer or believing,<sup>60</sup> faithful or reliable,<sup>61</sup> or trustworthy.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, therefore, while rendering τῷ πιστῷ as "the believer or believing" would be contextually possible in view of ἐπίστευσεν in verse 6, the "man of faith," rendering is considered a better translation in this paper. Just like Longenecker, Schreiner,<sup>63</sup> and Moo<sup>64</sup> also believe that Paul here is referring to Abraham's faith and not faithfulness in view of verse 6. This verse points to Abraham and those of faith, those who have been included in the new covenant people of God on account of faith in Christ, as sharing in the covenantal blessings, which was before the Torah and circumcision, by faith; faith being the means to this blessing. Paul's conclusion here is antithetical to what the Judaizers championed: Torah observance for the Galatians as the means of completeness in Christ or before God.

The exegetical analysis shows that Paul's argumentation indicates the true identity and means of inclusion into the new covenant people of God. In an evidence-based approach

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 6:32; Acts 10:45; 11:1; 13: 46 and 48; 15: 7 and 17; 18:6; Romans 2:14; 9:30; 15:9–12; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Ephesians 2:11; 2 Timothy 4:17.

<sup>60</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:15 (πιστῷ).

<sup>61</sup> 1 Peter 4:19 (πιστῷ); Colossians 4:9 (πιστῷ).

<sup>62</sup> Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 375.

<sup>63</sup> Schreiner, *Galatians*, 2010, 218.

<sup>64</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 200.

and a rhetorical sense, it is a fact from the Galatians' own experience that they got included in the new covenant people of God through faith in Christ and not through the works of the law, as argued in verses 1–5. For Paul, the Spirit and God's miraculous outworking in the lives of the Galatians is such an undeniable fact and a marker of the Galatians as the people of God. Besides the Galatians' experience, the Scriptures, as Paul argued in verses 6–9, are a testament that Galatians fully belong to the new covenant people of God, as they believed just as Abraham believed.

### **Conclusion**

Galatians is central to understanding Paul's theology of justification by faith as the means of inclusion in the new covenant people of God, as opposed to Torah observance, which was the Galatian heresy. Both covenantal nomism and works righteousness (legalism) would fit the Galatian heresy; the Judaizers push for the believing Gentiles in Galatia to add to their faith works of the law for them to be complete before God.

Just like in Ephesians 1 and 2, only justification by faith and the work of the Spirit serves as the means of inclusion and marker for those who belong in the new covenant people of God (Gal 3:1–5). Paul clarifies that the Galatians' experience is a testament that they have become full members of the people of God; they have received the Spirit, the marker of God's people, and experienced the miracles of God on account of faith in Christ. On this account, there is no need to add or subtract anything from the faith in Christ for one to be complete before God. In verses 6–9, Paul argues that the Gentiles who have believed like Abraham have become sons of Abraham and are blessed through Christ, thus made righteous and fully included in the new covenant people of God.

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