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Galatians 3 and Romans 4: One Doctrine, Two Methods of Justification

Introduction

The rise and spread of Christianity brings new ideas and doctrines. In order for new principles to take root, justification must be made to show people why the set of guidelines is valid. One such idea is Paul's doctrine of justification through faith. Two places in the New Testament where Paul explains and justifies this doctrine are Galatians 3:6-18 and Romans 4:16-25. While both the Galatians passage and the Romans passage seek to show justification for how the Gentiles can be saved by faith in God, the Galatians passage utilizes a more in depth reasoning based on an examination of Mosaic law, while the Romans passage ignores Mosaic law and focuses on telling the story of Abraham's faith. Both sections of the New Testament have ties to the Hebrew Bible and other similarities between them. However, the most significant difference between the two is found in how they explain and defend the doctrine of justification by faith. Analyzing and interpreting the intertexture in the passages with the Hebrew Bible reveals this significant difference.

Ties to the Hebrew Bible in Galatians 3:6-18

Paul, the author of both Galatians and Romans, grounds these two passages in the Old Testament story of Abraham. Analytical techniques can help reveal the connections between the passages and the Hebrew Bible. One such technique is intertexture. Intertexture is defined as a "text's representation of, reference to, and use of phenomena in the 'world' outside the text being interpreted" (Robbins, 40). Four different types of intertexture can be used to analyze biblical passages. One such type is oral-scribal texture, which is defined as a "text's use of any other text outside of itself, whether it is an inscription, the work of a Greek poet, non-canonical apocalyptic material, or the Hebrew Bible" (Robbins, 40). Analyzing the oral-scribal intertexture in the Galatians passage reveals seven references to the Hebrew Bible (Appendix E).

Four references to the Hebrew Bible can be grouped together and the other three references can be grouped together. Four of the references fit into a group within oral-scribal texture that author Vernon Robbins describes as the “replication of exact words with one or more differences” (Robbins, 41). Galatians 3:6 replicates information found in Genesis 15:6. In Galatians 3:6, Paul writes that “Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’” and the author of Genesis writes that “he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness” (NRSV, Galatians 3:6, Genesis 15:6). The second reference tie that is part of this group is Galatians 3:8 and Genesis 12:3. In Galatians 3:8, Paul writes that “all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you,” while in Genesis the author writes that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (NRSV, Galatians 3:8, Genesis 15:6). Both writers are referring to Abraham when they use the pronoun “you.” This can be interpreted through reading the verses that surround these. The next reference tie that is part of the “replication of exact words with one or more differences” group is Galatians 3:8 and Genesis 18:18. In Galatians, Paul writes that “all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you,” while in Genesis it is written that “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him” (NRSV, Galatians 3:8, Genesis 15:6). Again, the pronouns “you” and “him” both refer to Abraham. The last reference tie in this group is found in Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13. The author of Deuteronomy writes that “for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse,” while Paul writes that “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (NRSV, Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13). Each of these reference ties shows the connection between Galatians 3:6-18 and the Hebrew Bible. Each New Testament verse has only one or more differences from its Old Testament counterpart, thus forming an oral-scribal intertexture tie with the Hebrew Bible.

The other three oral-scribal intertexture examples from Galatians 3:6-18 can also be grouped together. These reference ties fall under Robbins’ category of “recitation of a saying using words different from the authoritative source” (Robbins, 42). These reference ties use similar wording, but they either add words or phrases or leave out words or phrases. The first reference tie is found between Galatians 3:8 and Genesis 22:18. The author in Genesis 22:18 writes that “all the nations of the earth gain blessing” through Abraham, while Paul writes in Galatians that “all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you” (NRSV, Genesis 22:18, Galatians 3:8). Paul’s version of the scripture in Galatians uses different words to say the same thing. Each scripture means to show that Abraham’s offspring will be blessed, but each uses different terms.

The second reference tie is found between Galatians 3:10 and Deuteronomy 27:26. The author in Deuteronomy writes that “cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them,” while Paul writes in Galatians that “cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all things written in the book of law” (NRSV, Deuteronomy 27:26, Galatians 3:10). While very similar, Paul inserts the terms “observe and obey” and “the book of law” into his revision of the scripture in Galatians, thus placing this reference to the Hebrew Bible in the second category and not the first. The third reference tie is between Galatians 3:12 and Leviticus 18:5. The author in Leviticus writes that “you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances [and] by doing so one shall live,” while Paul writes that “whoever does the works of the law will live by them” (NRSV, Leviticus 18:5, Galatians 3:12). Although similar in subject and words, Paul substitutes “works of the law” for “my statutes and my ordinances” and says that people “will live by the works of the law” instead of “by doing so one shall live.” While these differences are minor they still use different terms from the original in Leviticus. The seven references found in the two groups of oral-scribal texture in Galatians 3:6-18 show the connections of the passage to the Hebrew Bible.

Ties to the Hebrew Bible in Romans 4:16-25

Oral-scribal intertexture is also found in the Romans 4:16-25 passage. While there is the presence of oral-scribal intertexture in the Romans passage, the selection includes only three references (Appendix F). This is four short of the total references found in the Galatians passage. Regardless, references to the Hebrew Bible are present. All three of the reference ties in Romans 4:16-25 fall under Robbins’ oral-scribal intertexture category of “replication of exact words with one or more differences” (Robbins, 41). The first reference tie is between Genesis 17:5 and Romans 4:17. The author of Genesis writes “for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations,” while Paul writes in Romans “I have made you the father of many nations” (NRSV, Genesis 17:5, Romans 4:17). The only real difference between these two scriptures is the use of the words “father” and “many” in Romans instead of “ancestor” and “multitude.” The second reference tie is found between Genesis 15:5 and Romans 4:18. In Genesis it is written “so shall your descendants be,” while in Romans it is written “so numerous shall your descendants be” (NRSV, Genesis 15:5, Romans 4:17). This is a clear replication of the scripture from the Hebrew Bible with the one difference of Paul adding the word

“numerous.” The last reference tie in the Romans passage is between Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:22-23. The author of Genesis writes “the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness,” while Paul writes that “his faith ‘was reckoned with him as righteousness” (NRSV, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:22-23). Both verses are referring to Abraham and his faith being reckoned to him as righteous with minor changes in word use. These four oral-scribal intertexture references show how the Romans 4:16-25 passage has a strong connection to the Hebrew Bible.

Further Similarities between Galatians 3:6-18 and Romans 4:16-25

Other similarities besides the use of intertexture exist between Galatians 3:6-18 and Romans 4:16-25. These two passages refer to the same Hebrew Bible person. Abraham is mentioned seven times in the Galatians passage (Appendix B). While the Romans passage only mentions Abraham by name one time, it refers to Abraham as a father three times (Appendix D). Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is mentioned only in the Romans passage, but this is in connection with God fulfilling the promise he gave to Abraham. While Sarah is not explicitly referenced in Galatians 3:6-18, she is a major component of God’s promise to Abraham.

Both passages also have similar purposes that involve faith and God’s promise to Abraham. According to author Stephen Harris the purpose of Galatians is “to demonstrate that Jew and Gentile are equally saved by faith in Jesus’ redemptive power” and the purpose of Romans is to “give a careful explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith and the place of both Jews and Gentiles in the divine plan for human redemption” (Harris, 344 and 348). Both passages also deal with the subject of faith. This is shown through repetitive texture. Both the Galatians and Romans passages mention “faith” four times (Appendices B and D). Paul used repetition to help make his subject in both passages clear. Paul also wanted to make it clear to his readers that he was using God’s promise to Abraham as support for his doctrine of justification by faith. In Galatians 3:6-18 the “promise” is referenced four times and in Romans 4:16-25 the “promise” is referenced three times. Through the use of what Robbins has defined as repetitive texture, Paul shows his reader the most important subjects and topics to take away from the passage (Robbins). However, the similarities between the two passages end when the discussion moves to how Paul provides support in each passage for his doctrine.

Using an Abraham Story as Justification in Romans 4:16-25

The Romans passage focuses on a story about Abraham's faith in God to fulfill a promise to him as support for the doctrine of justification by faith. Romans 4:16-25 only mentions the "law" once in the opening section of the passage. Paul never returns to the "law" or offers any further explanation besides the statement "not only to the adherents of the law" (NRSV, Romans 4:16). This lack of reference to and mentioning of the Mosaic Law of the Hebrew Bible fits with the oral-scribal intertexture shown in Appendix F. Appendix F shows a verse and a corresponding reference in the Hebrew Bible for the opening, middle, and closing of Romans 4:16-25. None of the three scriptures referred to by Paul in the Romans passage contains any information about the law. Thus the intertexture reveals no references to the law, making Romans 4:16-25 noticeably different from Galatians 3:6-18.

In Romans, Paul shows his support for the doctrine of justification by faith by retelling a story involving Abraham's faith. The entire middle portion of Romans 4:16-25 is dedicated to telling the story of Abraham (Appendix C). Paul intends to justify his doctrine by showing that God fulfilled his promise to Abraham because of Abraham's faith. Since those in the present day Church are descendants of Abraham, God will fulfill his promise to them if they show faith like Abraham showed. Paul refers to Abraham by name only once, but he uses the term father to refer to him three times. He refers to Abraham as the "father of all of us" once and the "father of many nations" twice. The "father of many nations" reference has an intertexture connection with Genesis 17:5 where God changes Abraham's name from Abram to Abraham to reflect the fact that he will be the "ancestor of a multitude of nations" (NRSV, Genesis 17:5). Each of these has an intertexture tie with the Hebrew Bible. Paul lays out his support for his assertion that people in the present day are tied to Abraham and the promise that God gave him. Without this connection, one could argue that the justification by faith given to Abraham would not work for those in the present day. Paul refutes this through his use of Abraham's story and intertexture references to the Hebrew Bible.

Justification through Mosaic Law in Galatians 3:6-18

In contrast to Romans 4, Paul's support for his doctrine of justification by faith in Galatians 3:6-18 is entirely dependent on a reference to and explanation of Mosaic Law. Whereas the Romans passage only mentions the word "law" once, the Galatians passage

mentions the “law” five times (Appendix B). While the middle section of the Romans passage focuses on a telling of a story involving God’s promise to Abraham to make him a “father of many nations,” Galatians 3:6-18 focuses on an explanation of why living by the law is worse than living by faith. Unlike the Romans passage, the story of Abraham’s faith is not the focus of Galatians. Abraham’s story is used only to establish a contrast with the law and to back up Paul’s claims about the law. Since Romans 4:16-25 barely mentions the law and its effects at all, Galatians 3:6-18 is unique in the way it does concern itself greatly with the law and its effects.

Unlike the Romans passage, much more social intertexture is found in the Galatians passage. Author Vernon Robbins defines social intertexture as “phenomena in text [that raises] the issue of social meanings that interpreters investigate by means of data outside” the work in which the phenomena occur (Robbins, 63). Robbins also mentions three different kinds of social intertexture (social role, social institution, and social code), and all three are present in the Galatians passage (Robbins, 62). The “book of law” or the “law” is mentioned five times in Galatians 3:6-18. The law is a type of social code that finds its foundation in the Hebrew Bible or the first five books of the Old Testament. Understanding the law and the social meaning of the law requires that readers either refer to the Hebrew Bible or already know the Hebrew Bible. Paul also uses social institution intertexture when he uses a “person’s will” as an example in Galatians 3:15 and 3:17. Paul uses the words “ratify” and “annul” to connect his example to his justification. In order for his readers to understand how a person’s legal will can be related to their faith in God to fulfill his promises, the readers must investigate other texts and historical data to understand what the legal components of wills were during that time period. Those reading the example during Paul’s day would have either had an understanding of how wills worked or would have had to find out from others around them. Either way they would have had to go outside the passage in order to understand fully the social meaning and relevance of the example for Paul’s argument about justification. One other social intertexture type can be found in the Galatians 3:6-18 passage. The word Gentiles is referred to twice in the passage and falls under the social identity category in social knowledge (Robbins, 62). The use of “Gentiles” in Galatians 3:8 can be connected to many verses in the Hebrew Bible, but here in particular they are connected to Genesis 12:3; 18:18; and 22:18 (Appendix E). In all of these passages, the words “families of the earth” and “nations of the earth” are used instead of the word Gentiles (NSRV, Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18). In order to fully understand who would be considered a

Gentile, Paul's readers would have to turn either to these Hebrew Bible scriptures to get definitions or to those around them who have knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. The three kinds of social intertexture (social code, social institution, and social identity) one can find in Galatians 3:6-18 are not as readily found in Romans 4:16-25.

Conclusion

Paul strives to support his doctrine of justification by faith in Romans 4:16-25 and Galatians 3:6-18. These two passages share a common purpose and goal. Both the selection in Romans and the selection in Galatians have multiple instances of intertexture with the Hebrew Bible. Paul references Hebrew Bible people such as Abraham and Sarah and he utilizes the story of Abraham's faith in God's promise to make him a "father of many nations" in order to provide a foundation for his doctrine. While Romans 4:16-25 and Galatians 3:6-18 share many similarities, the most significant difference between them is how Paul tries to support his claim. While the retelling of Abraham's story and relating it to the current day is the plan of attack in Romans 4:16-25, Paul decides to ground Galatians 3:16-18 in a discussion of Hebrew Bible Mosaic Law. The discussion of the law leads to the use of social intertexture more than in the Romans passage. Paul uses two different methods to justify his one doctrine of justification by faith.

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Appendix A: Galatians Chapter 3:6-18

(Repetition of Abraham/God/Gentiles/Faith/Curse/Believe/Promise/Law)

Galatians 3:6-18
<p>Opening:</p> <p>⁶ Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’, ⁷ so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’</p>
<p>Middle:</p> <p>⁹ For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed. ¹⁰ For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.’ ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ ¹² But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, ‘Whoever does the works of the law[*] will live by them.’ ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’— ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ¹⁵ Brothers and sisters,[*] I give an example from daily life: once a person’s will[*] has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it. ¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring;[*] it does not say, ‘And to offsprings’,[*] as of many; but it says, ‘And to your offspring’,[*] that is, to one person, who is Christ.</p>
<p>Closing:</p> <p>¹⁷ My point is this: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.</p>

Bold: Repetitive texture

Appendix B: Repetitive Textures in Galatians 3:6-18

6:	Abraham	God			Believe	
7:	Abraham				Believe	
8:	Abraham	God	Gentiles	Faith		
9:	Abraham				Believe	
10:					Curse	Law
11:		God		Faith		Law
12:				Faith		Law
13:					Curse	Law
14:	Abraham		Gentiles	Faith		Promise
15:						
16:	Abraham				Promise	
17:		God			Promise	Law
18:	Abraham	God			Promise	

Appendix C: Romans Chapter 4:16-25 (Repetition of Descendants/Father/Faith/Promise/Reckoned/Believe)

Romans 4:16-25	
Opening:	<p>16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us,</p> <p>¹⁷ as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.</p>
Middle:	<p>18 Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become ‘the father of many nations’, according to what was said, ‘So numerous shall your descendants be.’</p> <p>¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already * as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.</p> <p>²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,</p> <p>²¹ being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.</p> <p>²² Therefore his faith* ‘was reckoned to him as righteousness.’</p>
Closing:	<p>23 Now the words, ‘it was reckoned to him’, were written not for his sake alone,</p> <p>²⁴ but for ours also.</p> <p>It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,</p> <p>²⁵ who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.</p>

Bold: Repetitive texture

Appendix D: Repetitive Textures in Romans 4:16-25

16:	Descendants	Father	Faith	Promise	
17:		Father			Believe
18:	Descendants	Father			Believe
19:			Faith		
20:			Faith	Promise	
21:				Promise	
22:			Faith		Reckoned
23:					Reckoned
24:					Reckoned Believe

Appendix E: Intertexture in Galatians 3:6-18

<p>“And he believed <u>the Lord</u>; and <u>the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.</u>” (Genesis 15:6)</p>	<p>“Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’” (Galatians 3:6)</p>
<p>“I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3)</p>	<p>“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel before hand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’” (Galatians 3:8)</p>
<p>“seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Genesis 18:18)</p>	<p>“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel before hand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’” (Galatians 3:8)</p>
<p>“and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:18)</p>	<p>“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel before hand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’” (Galatians 3:8)</p>
<p>“Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them. All the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” (Deuteronomy 27:26)</p>	<p>“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all things written in the book of law.’” (Galatians 3:10)</p>
<p>“You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 18:5)</p>	<p>“But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, ‘Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.’” (Galatians 3:12)</p>
<p>“his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, <u>for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse.</u> You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession.” (Deuteronomy 21:23)</p>	<p>“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13)</p>

Bold: Exact verbatim wording

Underline: Wording close in meaning

Appendix F: Intertexture in Romans 4:16-25

<p>“No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.” (Genesis 17:5)</p>	<p>“as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of <u>many nations</u>’ – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” (Romans 4:17)</p>
<p>“He brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” (Genesis 15:5)</p>	<p>“Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So <u>numerous shall your descendants be.</u>” (Romans 4:18)</p>
<p>“And <u>he believed the Lord</u>; and <u>the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.</u>” (Genesis 15:6)</p>	<p>“Therefore <u>his faith</u> ‘<u>was reckoned with him as righteousness.</u>’ Now the words, ‘<u>it was reckoned to him,</u>’ were written not for his sake alone,” (Romans 4:22-23)</p>

Bold: Exact verbatim wording

Underline: Wording close in meaning