

Paul takes great pains here to cover all facets of the truth of Salvation by Grace through Faith. This is the theme of several of his epistles and is interwoven in all the rest, for it is basic to all New Testament truth. He views it from every angle answering every conceivable argument that might be raised against it. Abraham's natural descendants through Isaac were not made heirs by the Law. It was given generations later. The Law did indeed work among the children of Israel to whom it was given, but certainly not in the way they anticipated when they took it upon themselves at the foot of Sinai. It worked wrath. It turned all their sins into transgressions. Each of these had prescribed punishments, even death for some. They put themselves on higher ground than the benighted Gentiles but with the heightened knowledge came increased responsibility and more severe immediate consequences for sin. Before the Flood God had not authorized punishments for sins. After the Flood He set down only one rule. He decreed capital punishment for anyone daring to kill a human being. Why? The stated reason was because every human is the image of God. Humans were given authority and responsibility to administer justice for this one crime. Government of humans by humans came into existence. Civilization!?

What became of it? Strong, ambitious men rose to power. Ignoring God's command to spread abroad and fill the earth they attempted to centralize and consolidate their power on earth. God intervened and supernaturally divided the one common language into many. This brought about the scattering necessary to postpone a premature unified rebellion of all mankind against Him. (The Son of man was to be crucified by His creatures. Now in this day of grace their full open rebellion is held at bay until the Tribulation while the gospel of grace goes out to all.) Families then formed themselves into nations both for mutual protection and aggression. Marauders defending against marauders. Not all was anarchy, but Genesis 14 and Job 1:14, 17 tell of early marauding tribes and nations, the rest of the Bible documents and predicts wars and rumors of wars.

In short, in less than 300 years it all fell apart. Then God in His sovereignty chose Abram, appeared to him in Ur of the Chaldees and called him out of there, promising blessing upon the whole earth through his descendants. Abram responded believing God, and the rest is history.

Abram's faith is the kind of faith that saves, saves eternally. Believing he responded with actions based upon his faith, and was personally counted righteous before God. As he walked with God he was tested and he was given more promises, promises that were more and more preposterous, naturally speaking. Tougher and tougher tests came that gave witness to his faith and glorified the God that rewards faith. See Genesis 22.

Paul shows how God went out of His way to assure there was no human power involved in birth of Isaac, the

promised heir through Sarah. He made Abram wait until all natural reproductive function was lost to aging, both his and his wife's. Abraham's faith persisted. He had yielded once to Sarah's impatience, having a son by her hand maiden, (incidentally verifying his virility and her bareness.) Thirteen years later they miraculously had their own little son. By faith their aged and "dead" bodies were renewed to childbearing vigor and desire. He is said to have hoped against hope. Hope could be thought of as a special category of faith. Faith specifically focused on a promise for future fulfillment. We live in hope today, the hope of the Lord's coming, Ephesians 4:4. Faith, Hope and Love, these three, but the greatest of these is Love, for it never passes away and is perpetually being fulfilled, 1Cor. 13:13.

Even when Abraham's faith failed, his son of the bondwomen became a great company of peoples still inhabiting the Middle East today. Abraham staggered not at the promise of God, but was strong in faith and gave glory to God. He was completely sure of God's promise. This again was imputed to him for righteousness. His act of faith in faith was recorded here for our learning and benefit. We receive the results of great and precious promises just as Abraham did. Eternal Life. Forgiveness of sins. Justification before God, and much more. How? Believe Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Simply believe it was for you, for me. The next huge conclusion is that having believed we have peace with God, and much more., Romans 5 (Next Week).

So, was Abram saved by works? No, by faith. Are you and I saved by works? No, by faith. Were the commands and promises Abram received greater than those given you and me? Is believing that the blood of Christ justifies me in God's sight harder to believe than "In thy seed (Israel then Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blest"? Can we dare believe "Ye shall inherit the Kingdom of God"? and "Ye shall reign with Him (Christ)"? Was Abram saved by the same shed blood that saves you and me? Was he any less secure than you and I? He lived in a different era, 2000 years before Christ. Already almost 2000 years have passed since Christ. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God, Hebrews 11:8-19. We do too. How many more years before, in heaven, we see the Lamb as it had been slain? And we meet Abraham (Luke 16:19-31) and Sarah and Isaac their son of their old age. And David, Abraham's royal descendant, the first of a dynasty culminating in the millennial reign of great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham is called the friend of God by Jehoshaphat, 2Chronicles 20:7, and by God, Isaiah 41:8, and by James (2:23). Beside the instances in Genesis where his story is told there are about 84 references to Abraham in the Bible, 70 in the NT. Truly a man in favor with God. Our spiritual father. Emulate him.

By Ron Canner, September 5, 2007