

Salvation—The Person and Work of Christ (8th)

(Today we continue studying the Person and work of Christ in connection to salvation. We are continuing this discussion as introduced in the previous podcast regarding the redemptive work of Christ as it relates to the seed of Abraham regarding Genesis 15:6. Among the topics discussed are justification, faith, and the righteousness of God.)

Before we directly give our attention to Genesis 15:6, it is imperative that we keep in mind the one overriding principle of the Holy Scriptures regarding salvation; that is, that salvation is solely by grace. Romans 11:6 says, “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” This plainly declares that if salvation is by grace then it is not by works, but if it is by works then grace is excluded. All professing Christians affirm Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Herein we are plainly told that salvation is “by grace” and “not of works.” There is another passage that is often overlooked to which we direct our attention that is vital to the subject at hand. It is Romans 3:27: “Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” The context is discussing the subject of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ in connection with faith. That this text is fundamental to our subject, Genesis 15:6 is quoted immediately in Romans 4:3.

In Romans 3:27 God clearly established two laws (or principles) that are mutually exclusive of each other—works and faith. To be clear as to what we mean by the term principle, we give this definition: “A fundamental truth; a comprehensive law or doctrine, from which others are derived, or on which others are founded; a general truth; an elementary proposition; a maxim; an axiom; a postulate.” *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* from Sword Searcher Bible program. From this definition, our attention is on “a fundamental truth; a comprehensive law or doctrine.” What is this “fundamental truth” or “comprehensive law or doctrine” of faith? To better clarify the “law of faith” regarding justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, let us review from the previous study the following verses.

Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is ***justified by faith*** without the deeds of the law.”

Romans 5:9, “Much more then, being now ***justified by his blood***, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Galatians 2:17, “But if, while we seek to be ***justified by Christ***, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.”

Titus 3:7, “That being ***justified by his grace***, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Also, Romans 3:24, “Being ***justified freely by his grace*** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

These verses (of which others could be given) unmistakably declare that justification is by ***faith, blood, Christ, and grace***. Is this saying (as some teach) that there are four ways or kinds of justification? I think not. These verses are simply saying the same thing; justification by the imputed righteous of Jesus Christ. As previously pointed out from Romans 3:27, the law of faith or the “fundamental truth” of faith is that salvation is not by the law of works. In other words, ***faith*** is used to identify the “comprehensive law or doctrine” of how man is justified: that is, the Person and work of Christ. Equally, the phrases in the other passages referenced above are testifying to the same truth. In other words, being justified by ***faith, blood, Christ, or grace*** is simply declaring that justification is by the imputed righteousness of Christ. With this steadfastly affirmed, along with the previous study regarding the life of Abraham before this time, we should be able to look at Genesis 15:6 and not be lost as many are in a sea of uncertainty, or as Calvin said from our previous podcast, “the greater part of interpreters

wander with closed eyes, as in the darkness of night.” (We have reviewed this “law of faith” again because this fundamental truth is so often overlooked by many in this discussion and it is essential that we do not forget it.)

That the place of faith is often compromised in the interpretation of Genesis 15:6 we will provide a couple of quotes. Though previously quoted, note again John Calvin’s comment on this verse, John Calvin said, “In the first place, the faith of Abram is commended, because by it he embraced the promise of God; it is commended, in the second place, because hence Abram obtained righteousness in the sight of God, and that by imputation.” Note that Calvin said that the faith of Abram “is commended, in the second place, because hence Abram obtained righteousness in the sight of God, and that by imputation.” In other words, Abram’s faith “obtained righteousness in the sight of God ... by imputation.” He further said, “Lastly, it is not less the part of stupor than of impudence, when this faith is said to have been imputed to him for righteousness, to mingle with it some other meaning, than that the faith of Abram was accepted in the place of righteousness with God.” Note well that Calvin affirmed “that the faith of Abram was accepted in the place of righteousness with God.” Calvin has much more to say regarding this verse and even stated, “And truly faith does not justify us for any other reason, than that it reconciles us unto God; and that it does so, not by its own merit; but because we receive the grace offered to us in the promises, and have no doubt of eternal life, being fully persuaded that we are loved by God as sons.” Allow me to quickly say that according to II Corinthians 5:18-21, we are told that we are reconciled to God “by Jesus Christ”; not by our faith. Commenting on the time of justification, Calvin wrote, “Abram was justified by faith many years after he had been called by God.”

Many quotes could be supplied by various authors to verify a disjunction regarding faith and salvation or justification, but I will show this from the writings of Jonathan Edwards as found in his article entitled “Justification By Faith Alone,” as found in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 1, page 623 of the Banner of Trust Truth edition. He wrote as follows:

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, though faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification; and that because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as used in divinity. In one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation; in another sense, faith is the condition of justification; in another sense, other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too. There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as are commonly used, ... such as condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification, the terms of the covenant, and the like; and I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word condition is very often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification; for by the word condition, as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used, we mean any thing that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition, and as such is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds both in the affirmative and negative, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing. But in this sense faith is not the only condition of salvation or justification; for there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation, in multitudes of places; such are love to God, and love to our brethren, forgiving men their trespasses, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, to be pursued or performed by us, in order to eternal life, which if they are done, or obtained, we shall have eternal life, and if not done, or not obtained, we shall surely perish. And if faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, I do not apprehend that to say faith was the condition of justification, would express the sense of that phrase of Scripture, of being justified by faith. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, necessarily, and inseparably

attending justification; for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connexion with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that effect has on its influence.

It is any wonder that people are so confused regarding the place of faith in salvation, especially in relation to justification and Genesis 15:6. Again, I echo the statement of Calvin regarding this: “But it is ... monstrous, that they who have had Paul as their luminous expositor; should so foolishly have depraved this place.” However, as previously shown, the principle (or law) of faith is the opposite of works and that our justification is by the imputed righteousness of Christ as expressed in the equivalent words of *faith, blood, Christ, and grace*. Additionally, Galatians 3:16 plainly expresses that the *seed* mentioned in Genesis 15:5 is Christ. Therefore, when it says in verse six that Abram “believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness,” the *it* was not Abram’s faith; the *it* imputed to Abram for righteousness was the *seed* or *Christ*. This removes the sea of uncertainty so often associated with salvation, especially regarding the subject of justification. (The Lord willing, we will discuss justification in more depth in the future and will likely refresh our attention to what we have covered in this study.) Obviously, we receive into our conscious many scriptural truths by faith and faith must have an object in which it rests, but it is not the cause of our salvation/justification. It is the evidence of our salvation/justification. Nevertheless, from the study today in connection with previous studies, it is certain that Genesis 15:6 is not when Abram (Abraham) first believed and it was not his faith that God accepted for righteousness; it was the *Seed* or *Christ*. That *faith, blood, Christ, and grace* are synonymous terms identifying the Person and work of Christ should be so plain and simple that all clouds of confusion should be rolled away and the truth is that salvation is totally of the Lord and that by grace without works.

Before we close this study we want to express that we do not wish to minimize the importance of faith and belief and that the sheep of Christ do believe, but that is to be discussed in future studies. However, our time is up for today. Farewell.