

## Salvation—The Person and Work of Christ

(7<sup>th</sup>)

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

In our last podcast we saw that our salvation was given us in Christ Jesus before the world according to the purpose and grace of God, cf. II Timothy 1:9. After the fall, the gospel was first announced in the Garden of Eden when God said that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (i.e., the devil). After the flood God made a covenant with Noah and “his seed after him.” It is generally believed that the “seed” is merely the seed of mankind. However, it must not be overlooked that Hebrew 11:7 says that Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Though the seed *per se* in the covenant with Noah is not limited to Christ we cannot help but wonder what all might be inclusive in it with reference to the declaration in Hebrews regarding Noah being the “heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Regardless of this, we shall plainly see from the Scriptures that the Seed of Abraham mentioned in Genesis 15:6 is definitely Christ, cf. Galatians 3:16. However, we will, the Lord willing, cover that further down the road. It was clearly shown in our previous study that Abraham was an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees, and that God regenerated him and turned his heart from his idolatrous worship by creating faith in him. Scripture tells us that Abraham left Ur by faith, Hebrews 11:8. We do not know how long he lived in Ur by faith, but we do know that it was approximately ten years after he left Haran that we come to Genesis fifteen. During that time it was plain that Abraham was a worshiper of the Almighty God. Upon leaving Haran, he built an altar and worshiped God at Sichem, in the plain of Moreh, Genesis 12:6. Afterwards, he built another altar and worshiped God at Bethel, Genesis 12:8. After leaving Egypt, he returned to Bethel and “called on the name of the Lord,” Genesis 13:4. After the separation of Abraham and Lot, the Lord told Abraham to look over the land promised to him and his seed, Genesis 13:15. Prior to Genesis fifteen, “Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God” (Hebrews 7:1) said that Abraham also was “of the most high God,” Genesis 14:19. All of this goes to prove that Genesis 15:6 is not when Abraham first believed or had faith, but that he was a believer and worshiper of God for years (at least ten and likely more) prior to his leaving Ur. While Genesis 15:6 is indeed a pivotal point in the life of Abraham and of vital importance regarding the justifying righteousness of Christ, it is important that we get the whole picture in the overall scheme of things. While I do not agree totally with John Calvin’s comments on the verse, I believe he has accurately assessed the situation regarding the interpretation of this verse when he said, “None of us would be able to conceive the rich and hidden doctrine which this passage contains, unless Paul had borne his torch before us. (Ro 4:3.) But it is strange, and seems like a prodigy, that when the Spirit of God has kindled so great a light, yet the greater part of interpreters wander with closed eyes, as in the darkness of night. I omit the Jews, whose blindness is well known. But it is (as I have said) monstrous, that they who have had Paul as their luminous expositor; should so foolishly have depraved this place. However it hence appears, that in all ages, Satan has labored at nothing more assiduously than to extinguish, or to smother, the gratuitous justification of faith, which is here expressly asserted.” (*Sword Search* computer Bible program.) To my knowledge, it is not questioned that Genesis 15:6 is directly connected to the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. (It is our intention to study the doctrine of justification and imputation in more details in future studies, but it is essential that we say something of these subjects in connection with this verse in the life of Abraham and the appointed Seed.)

First, justification is a legal term and it does not make anyone to be anything; it only declares what a person already is. Luke 7:29 makes this clear. It says, “And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.” It is without question that those baptized by John did not make God just or righteous. They “justified God”; that is, they proclaimed or declared God to be what He already was—righteous. While many definitions can be given I will simply give two at this time. James Buchanan said, “Justification is a legal, or forensic, term and is used in Scripture to denote the acceptance of any one as righteous in the sight of God.” (*The Doctrine of Justification*, p. 226.) John Gill put it this way, “... justification is a

pronouncing a person righteous according to law, as though he had never sinned ...” (*Sermons and Tracts*, Volume 2, p. 457.) Notice again that justification does not make one righteous, it merely pronounces him to be righteous. Condemnation is the opposite of justification and when the judge in the court of law pronounces a man guilty the judge does not make him guilty, he only pronounces him to be what he already is.

Second, the Scriptures declare that salvation and/or justification is by **Christ, blood, grace, and faith**. The following passages declare this truth: 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?” Romans 5:9, “Much more then, being now **justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Titus 3:7, “That being **justified by his grace**, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law.” While some use these verses to teach that man is justified four different ways, the Scriptures declare that there is only one salvation and one gospel: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts 4:12. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ,” Galatians 1:6-7. Therefore, it should be clear that when justification is spoken of as being by **faith, grace, blood, and Christ** that these terms are used to identify the Person and work of Christ. Too often the term “justified by faith” is so explained to lead the hearer or reader to think that a person is simply justified before God by believing or exercising faith and that this legal transaction takes place at faith. Following the quote given above by Calvin, he followed it by saying: “The words of Moses are, ‘He believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.’ 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.” (*Sword Search* computer Bible program.) Notice 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.” Does this not sound like Abram’s faith “obtained righteousness in the sight of God”? The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the righteousness whereby we are justified is the “righteousness of Christ” and many writers could be quoted that testifies to this as well. Here are a couple for your consideration:

George Smeaton stated that *the righteousness of God* “is descriptive of the finished work of Christ, as approved at the divine tribunal, and the meritorious cause of our acceptance.” Furthermore, he said, “The term righteousness ... does not in any passage mean the state of justification. If the state of justification does not proceed on an underlying righteousness as its basis, we are lost in the mists of uncertainty.” (*Atonement According to the Apostles*, pp. 52, 55.)

Agreeably, Charles Hodge wrote, “Hence this righteousness is not our own. It is nothing that we have either wrought ourselves, or that inheres in us. Hence Christ is said to be our righteousness; and we are said to be justified by his blood, his death, his obedience; we are righteous in him, and are justified by him or in his name, or for his sake. The righteousness of God, therefore, which the gospel reveals, and by which we are constituted righteous, is the perfect righteousness of Christ which completely meets and answers all the demands of that law to which all men are subject, and which all have broken.” (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 31.)

Likewise, since we are not doing a fuller study to this at this time, we will only quote three passages that affirm that justification is based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to those for whom He died. First is II Corinthians 5:21, which says, “For he (God) hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” In other words, God made Christ “to be sin for us” so that “we might be made the righteousness of God.” It should be obvious that the “righteousness of God” here is not that righteousness that resides in God in His divine nature. It is the righteousness that Christ produced on our behalf in His Person and work. (The Lord willing we will discuss this more fully in future studies.)

Next, I shall supply a couple from the Old Testament.

Isaiah 45:24-25 declares, “Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

Isaiah 54:17 equally affirms: “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.”

I regret that our time is used up for today and we will, the Lord willing, continue to enlarge more on Genesis 15:6 and its association with such topics as justification, imputation, and faith regarding the salvation of God. However, it is essential that we understand that the time of Genesis 15:6 regarding the life of Abraham is not when he was first united to faith and the salvation of God as is generally assumed. But we must close for now. Farewell.