

Romans 17 – When Did Abraham Believe God?

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Romans 4:1-3

Prologue: Boasting of Salvation?

- To understand the question we need to grasp the biblical definition of boasting (Law of Identity)
 - (Dictionary (com)) to speak with exaggeration and excessive pride, especially about oneself
 - (καύχησις) to vaunt oneself against someone, to treat someone in a derogatory or contemptuous manner
 - Boasting is blasphemy against God; to be as gods (De 3:17)

Prologue: Boasting is Double-Minded

- Boasting reveals one's double-mindedness (Unstable in all ways) and may include (Pr 12:13; Jo 8:44; Ja 1:5-8)
 - Lies
 - Rebellious attitude toward authority
 - Flattery
- God hates boasting, calling boasters deceitful and blood thirsty (Pr 5:46; Jo 8:44)

Prologue: Boasting is Excluded

- Law of works cannot save, it brings only knowledge of sin; but, law of faith is not of you, but of Christ (Ro 5:20)
 - Works of faith is the outward results of inward faith; i.e., the new nature producing Christ-like works (Ja 2:18-20)
 - Faith is not produced by the believer but by the word of God empowered by the Spirit; a gift of grace (Ro 10:17; 1Co 2:14)
 - Faith unifies one with Father, Christ, Spirit & believers (He 11:1, 12:2)

Logical Argument Based on Abram

- Paul continues his proof that God accepts both the circumcised and the uncircumcised based on faith
 - Using the Socratic method Paul begins with a question
 - He answers the question from Scripture; the authority of God; Christ used both these methods (2Ti 3:16)
 - Paul uses Abram to answer this question; we must understand Abram's lineage and Abram to grasp his faith

Back to Genesis

- We need to trace Abram's lineage to understand why he believed; remember, God prepared him for this time
 - God began long before Abram's birth
 - Genealogy of Noah, Shem and Shem's sons is vital
 - Names often have meaning in Old Testament
 - Our underlying concept is God's command: Spread out and multiply, which people did not fully obey

God's Continual Command

- Command to go and multiply began with Adam (Ge 1:26-28)
 - Adam repeated this command after receiving Woman (Ge 1:21-25)
 - Those who rejected God wandered (Nod) away from those who followed God (Ge 4:16)
 - Cain, Nod(er), developed government and cities (Ge 4:17)
 - His descendants developed various skills including army (Ge 4:19-22)
 - Violence increased nearly destroying the godly people (Ge 6:1-8)

Noah Found Grace

- Noah, rest, demonstrates Christ's promise to us (He 11:20)
 - Noah and sons believed God, built an ark and survived the Cataclysm that remade the world (He 11:7; 1Pe 3:18-20)
 - God commanded Noah: Multiply and fill the earth (Ge 9:1, 7)
 - After Noah's drunkenness he prophesized about his sons, concerned only with Shem (Name) - Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem (Ge 9:26-27)

Shem Carried Name of God

- Testimony of God's message carried by Shem and his obedient sons
 - Arphaxad settled apart from Shem (Ge 11:10)
 - Shelah sprouted in his father's new land (Ge 11:12)
 - Eber settled lands away from his father (Ge 11:14)



The Jews based their understanding of Genesis Table of Nations on geopolitical boundaries of their day. These patriarchs moved from today's northern Iraq region spreading out while all others remained near Babel. Hebrews assumed the name of Eber, region beyond, as God called them to the region beyond, Promised Land.

Genealogy Continued

- Shem's sons continued
 - Peleg, *Division*, May refer to Babel and he moved away from others obeying God like his fathers (Ge 11:16)
 - Reu, *Friend*, can apply to man and God; at peace in land (Ge 11:18, Mt 5:9)
 - Serug, *Tendrill*, grew in the land; Great Grandfather (Ge 11:20)
 - Nahor, *Snorter*, angry with man and God; Grandfather (Ge 11:22, Ps 38:8)

Now We Come to Abram

- Terah, *Delay*, father of Abram, is true to his name
 - He worshiped idols showing the degradation of Shem's line of obedient sons (Ge 11:24)
 - His life delayed God's command to Abram to go to another land until after he died [Delayed] (Ge 11:31-32, 12:1-3)
 - Abram, *Honored Father*, descended from obedient men who obeyed God until Nahor and Terah; implies Abram exposed to idols and godly fathers, he chose latter (Jos 24:2)

God's Call: Leave Your Family

- God's call to Abram was not completely obeyed nor did Abram protect his wife; he sinned; like us
 - First call (75 y/o) - Leave Haran and extended family to go to the land I will show you; he took Lot (Ge 12:1-3)
 - Abram entered Canaan but left during a famine to go to Egypt; he said his wife was his sister (Ge 12:10-20)
 - Driven by different desires, strife, Abram and Lot separate: Abram stays in Canaan, Lot goes to Sodom (Ge 13:8-13)

God Calls Abram Again

- Shem and many of his lineage waited for God to fulfill his promise to Woman; defeat of Satan (Ge 3:16; He 11:13-16)
- Abram rejected father's idols, choosing to believe God though he struggles with obedience and faith; like us
- After Lot separated, God spoke to Abram repeating his promise, adding proviso of *earthly* descendants (Ge 13:14-18)

God Reveals Another Facet

- Abram rescues Lot, meets Melchizedek, priest of God, he is strengthened to resist temptation of king of Sodom (Ge 14:17-24)
- God comes to Abram again; Abram asks how he can have descendants when he is childless (Ge 15:1-4; Mt 7:7-11)
- God sent Abram outside to look at heavens; thus, He promised Abram descendants beyond counting (Ge 15:5)

Abram Believed God

- God had Abram look at the night sky filled with myriad galaxies telling him this represented his *heavenly* seed {One} who would be his own heir (Ge 15:4-5; Ge 3:15-18)
 - Based on his meeting with Melchizedek, and ten years experiencing God's faithfulness despite his lack of obedience; Abram believes God based only on God's promise {*hope*} (Ge 15:6; Ro 8:24)

Abram's Call No Accident

- We see Satan at work suppressing God's word in the life of Nahor and Terah; but also see power of God in preserving His promise with the call of Abram who believed God (Ro 8:28-31)
 - God predestined Abram before Creation to be Father of all the Faithful in Christ (Ep 1:3-6)
 - Though he sinned, God was faithful; and Satan could not pluck Abram from God's hand (Jo 10:28-29)

When Was Abram Saved?

- While I cannot answer absolutely, I believed Abram was saved **after** he believed God; and it was accounted to him for righteousness (De 15:6)
 - Before that Abram was religious, as Job was religious until his salvation; he followed God incompletely because he did not trust Him or his promises (Job 40:1-5; 42:1-6)
 - God works via His word to bring each person to salvation via various experiences uniquely developing us (Ro 8:28-31; 10:17)

Epilogue: Back to Genesis

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Now We Understand Abraham

- We understand why Paul used Abraham's salvation; but God not finished with Abraham yet; nor with us
 - God made covenant with Himself to fulfill His promise to Abram (Abram saw covenant in vision (Ge 15:7-21) 85 y/o)
 - Abram name changed to Abraham; sign of circumcision given and promise of birth of Isaac: Abraham laughed (Ge 17:1-39) 99 y/o
 - When Abraham obeyed God, nearly sacrificing Isaac, He repeated His promise & foretold Himself as lamb (Ge 22) Isaac probably in early teens making Abraham 113-117 y/o