

Wherefore Then Serveth the Law (Gal 3:19)? – Part 4

In Romans 4, Paul the apostle to Gentiles, gives argument that both the believing Jew and believing Gentile could lay claims as to Abraham being their father. Paul is addressing Gentiles who were of the faith of Abraham.

Romans 4:11-12 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: **12** And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

The Jew obviously pointed a finger to Genesis chapters 12 & 17 where two separate covenants were made with them in mind. The Abrahamic Covenant that promised Abraham a physical seed and a physical land. The Covenant of Circumcision which was a seal and token of the security within that seed.

Where exactly then could these Gentiles, who are said to be of the faith of Abraham, point their finger to as Abraham being their father?

Galatians 3:8-9 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. **9** So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward. **2** And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus? **3** And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. **4** And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. **5** And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. **6** And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

... “and he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

Something unique happens in Genesis 15 that most commentaries and preachers still can't wrap their fingers around! Abraham was already living 'by faith', obeying God's voice, keeping God's charge, God's commandments, God's statutes, and God's laws and this was even before the Mosaic Covenant was given. Yet, we read in Genesis 15 that here righteousness was imputed to Abraham. Does this mean that righteousness was never counted to Abraham before Genesis 15? Absolutely not! Let's backup...

I believe that in the reading of a particular verse in Hebrews somewhat clouds a fact that was in existence since the beginning of creation.

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

...and without shedding of blood is no remission, wasn't a policy put in place originating with the Mosaic Covenant, but a precedence of God put in place after Adam's disobedience. The LORD was the first to offer a blood sacrifice in behalf of man.

Genesis 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

First mentions in the bible are often critical in determining a doctrine or pattern and the first act of righteousness recorded is that of the offering of a blood sacrifice.

Genesis 4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: **Hebrews 11:4** By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

There is no doubt in my mind that Noah was offering sacrifices before the flood though only record of is after the flood.

Genesis 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Abraham, prior to Genesis 15, was offering blood sacrifices (Gen 12:7-8; 13:4, 18), as I believe he was also before Genesis 12.

Job, whom I place after Abraham and before Moses, was continually offering sacrifices.

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. **Job 1:5** And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

On top of these righteous acts of sacrifices, for the remission of sins, each of these men had testimony that they were just before the LORD. As already stated, under the OT, a just man was one who was righteous before the LORD and imputed righteousness was based on faithful obedience.

What happened then in Genesis 15 that was different from the norm in which righteousness was imputed? On that day in Genesis 15, righteousness was imputed not based on obeying God's voice, keeping God's charge, God's commandments, statutes or laws, but in believing something God said.

I can imagine the conversation having gone something like this...

The LORD: Abraham, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir... So shall thy seed be.

Abraham: That's great LORD! What need I do?

The LORD: That's it...

Abraham: That's it? What's it?

The LORD: This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir... So shall thy seed be.

Abraham: Yes... but, what do I need to do LORD? Thou knows that this living 'by faith' thing for reward requires obedience!?

The LORD: This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir... So shall thy seed be. That's it Abraham...

Abraham: That's it?! Oh... that's it! Halleluiah! That's it!!

Romans 4:16-25 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, **17** (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. **18** Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. **19** And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: **20** He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; **21** And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. **22** And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. **23** Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; **24** But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; **25** Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

As God would continue to justify the circumcision via the means and method of 'by faith', the scripture foreseen that day in which God would justify the uncircumcision 'through faith' which is 'of faith'. That door 'of faith' was opened up to the Gentile in Acts 13-14, through the ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles... "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door 'of faith' unto the Gentiles." **Acts 14:27**

While the circumcision points finger to Genesis 12 & 17, as to Abraham being their father, the Gentile, which is of the faith of Abraham, points to Genesis 15 where righteousness was imputed for simply believing something and not in obedience to something.

Next post will deal with the Mosaic Covenant and role played in the circumcision being justified 'by faith'.

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study...!"