

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD
Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:1-9

Intro: One of the important keys to understanding the Scriptures is to observe the way the OT is used in the NT. When we say that we need to compare Scripture with Scripture in order to arrive at the truth, that principle is illustrated again and again by noticing how NT quotations of the OT bring before us the exact truth which is revealed in the Word of God.

Such is true of the two passages which I have chosen as my text for this evening. When Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he used the OT to establish the truth which the Galatians obviously needed to hear.

Actually Paul used two OT passages in our text in Galatians. Both of them are in Genesis. The first one he quoted in Gal. 3:6 was taken from Gen. 15:6, and the second in Gal. 3:8 was taken from Gen. 12:3. Both were designed to teach the Galatians the truth concerning salvation. Paul saw no reason to make any change in the OT revelation. Sometimes he spoke by special revelation, as was the case regarding the church; at other times, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he simply expounded what had been written beforehand, as was the case in this instance.

(Read both passages, and also Gen. 15:6, indicating that this was some 500 years before the Law was given--a factor which is of priceless value when we come to determine what salvation is today.)

I have called this, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD, because of the statement at the beginning of Gal. 3:8. Paul said that "the scripture . . . preached," but Gen. 12:1-3 makes it clear that it was God Who was speaking. Therefore, the voice that we hear in that ancient day declaring the everlasting Gospel, was the voice of God. So we could have the Gospel on no higher authority. It is THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD! There have been countless doctrines of salvation which have been proclaimed among men from the beginning of time, but the only one that we need to give even a second thought to is THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GOD. Any Gospel which does not have acceptance with God is not worth the breath that it takes to repeat it, nor the ink to write it!

What do these passages teach us?

- I. THEY TEACH THAT SALVATION IN THE OT and SALVATION IN THE NT ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

Paul was not altering the doctrine of salvation in the least. The way Abraham was saved is the way Paul was saved.

The way that Paul was saved was the way that the Galatians were saved. And the way that the Galatians were saved is the only way that you and I can be saved.

That one fact is perfectly clear. And it never has been changed--nor will it ever be changed.

Along this same line we learn another truth when we really understand Gen. 12:3. It is this:

II. SALVATION IS EXACTLY THE SAME FOR THE GENTILE AS IT EVER HAS BEEN FOR THE JEW.

Note: "all families" in Gen. 12:3, and see how this is explained in Gal. 3:8.

So, when Jewish believers tried to put the Gentiles under the Law for salvation, they were perverting the doctrine. God did not put the Jews under the Law for salvation, nor did He put the Gentiles under the Law in order that they might be saved.

So it is clear, first, that we do not have one kind of salvation in the OT, and another in the NT. But it is also clear that we do not have a Jewish salvation, on the one hand, and another for Gentiles in the NT, on the other hand.

Then there is a third thing that we need to notice:

III. SALVATION WAS PROMISED.

From this fact we learn several things which are extremely important.

A. This means that salvation was dependent upon God alone.

If something is given by a promise, then it is dependent upon the one who made the promise. This was before there was any Mosaic Law to obey. Nothing was stated as a conditional work in Gen. 12. There is no evidence that any man ever asked God to provide salvation. And there certainly is no evidence that any person ever deserved to be saved--either by his character, or by his accomplishments. Salvation was dependent upon God, the Promiser.

B. Since Abraham was concerned with a promise, it meant that salvation would come to men, Jews and Gentiles, by faith.

That is really clear from Gen. 12, but, to remove all

doubt, we have it clearly stated in Gen. 15:6.

Paul was teaching the Galatians the same in Gal. 3:6 and 8. Faith means, believing that God's promise was true, and that a person could safely believe that he was securely saved for eternity if he did nothing but but his faith in the promise given by God. He would not look for any other requirement, nothing else that he ought to do!

But this brings us to another point.

We have in the words of God to Abraham a covenant of salvation. It was offered by God in grace, dependent only upon His promise. Nothing more was ever implied to God by Abraham. It was never said that the covenant needed something else before it would be complete.

Therefore,

- C. Nothing else can be added without nullifying the covenant of salvation altogether.

Note Paul's argument in Gal. 3:15-18.

The original covenant was a faith covenant. If the Law were meant to be a part of that salvation, then you would have a faith-works covenant, salvation then being partly of God and partly of man, instead of being all of God as was indicated by the Lord to Abraham.

So when we trace salvation back to its OT roots we see that it was by faith alone, by grace, secured by God Himself, totally apart from any merit or any works of man.

But there is one other thing that we need to note before completing our examination of what God told Abraham in Gen. 12:3. It is this:

IV. GOD SAID, "IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED."

Does this mean that Abraham is our Saviour?

The Jews thought so. They felt that being a descendant of Abraham was sufficient. From what I understand about the Moslems, they think so, too.

But turn to Gen. 22:18. And then look at the way this was explained by Paul in Gal. 3:16. Salvation would be provided from the seed of Abraham, from a descendant of Abraham, and that descendant was none other than Christ!

Therefore, God cannot be unfaithful to Abraham without being unfaithful to His own Son! And He cannot be unfaithful to them without being unfaithful Himself--a thought which we cannot possibly accept!

— Concl: I have been using the term salvation all through my message, and I have been right in doing so. But Paul used the word, "justify," or the expression, "it was accounted to him," i.e., Abraham, "for righteousness."

To justify is to declare righteous, and to declare righteous means to absolve a person from all guilt or blame. It means that the person so justified is no longer under the judgment of God, no longer condemned, no longer sentenced to eternal hell. How could this be when every man is guilty and deserving of the full extent of the wrath of God? It is because of the death of Jesus Christ in which He paid the penalty for the sins of all who had ever or would ever turn in faith to Christ, the Redeemer of Jews and of Gentiles.

This is what it means to be saved--saved from the judgment of God. And it is all through Christ, and Christ alone! The Jews were saved, if they were saved at all, by faith. The same is true of the Gentiles--salvation for them is by faith alone.

— But, you say, what about our faith. Do we not get credit for that? Is that not our part in salvation?

No, it is not! Faith is also a part of that wonderful gift of salvation, showing that it is all of God. We had it in Sunday School this morning: Rom. 10:17. See also Heb. 12:2.

Come to Christ, if you have never come, and trust Him for all that has to do with your salvation.

May God enable us to be true to this great truth, not lowering it to bring it within the reach of man, but causing man to see that it is wholly a work of God, and that if He does not do the work, the work will never be done.

There are a number of hymns in our hymnal which say what I have been trying to say tonight. Let me read one of them to you as I close, a hymn written by Horatius Bonar (#403).