

GENESIS FIFTEEN, SIX

Intro: One thing about Gen. 15:6 which makes it so important is the fact that it is quoted three times in the NT:

- 1) Rom. 4:3.
- 2) Gal. 3:6.
- 3) Jas. 2:23.

It compares with Hab. 2:4 which is quoted in:

- 1) Rom. 1:17.
- 2) Gal. 3:11.
- 3) Heb. 10:38.

Such references tie together the OT and the NT showing that the basic teachings with respect to salvation are the same. BUT THERE ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT EMPHASIS EACH TIME THE VERSE IS USED. This is true of Hab. 2:4; it is equally true of Gen. 15:6. What we always need to do is to make sure that we understand the original passage, and then go from there to the NT quotations. The original passage will not be violated in the quotations, but some special aspect of the verse may serve to be emphasized which in turn makes the original verse much clearer.

I. THE ORIGINAL SOURCE: Genesis 15:6.

There is no more important subject in all of Scripture than the answer it gives to how sinful men can be brought into a place of forgiveness and acceptance with a holy God. From Gen. 3 on we see the gradual unfolding of this great truth. It is not all given at once, BUT WE CAN BE SURE THAT FROM THE VERY FIRST MEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BE SAVED, AND THAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SAVED IN THE SAME WAY.

Even Gen. 15:6 raises a question: Is it true that Abraham was not justified until this time?

The answer: He had to be justified before he even left Ur of the Chaldees because in Heb. 11:8 we read that "by faith Abraham . . . went out, not knowing whither he went."

Salvation never comes in installments. Men are either saved, or they are not saved. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GENESIS 15:6 IS THAT THE PICTURE IS MADE CLEARER; MORE DETAIL IS GIVEN SO THAT THE TRUTH OF SALVATION IS GIVEN IN MORE DETAIL THAN AT ANY TIME UP TO THIS POINT!

The quotation of Gen. 12:3 in Gal. 3:8 makes it clear that Abraham must have understood that his calling had

to do with the provision of salvation for the whole world.

Furthermore, he must have understood that the fulfillment would come through some descendant of his--his seed.

Therefore, when we come to Gen. 15 we enter upon a very discouraging time in Abraham's life. The promise given in Gen. 15:1 seemed pointless and empty. AND IN V. 2 WE HAVE THE FIRST ACCOUNT OF ANYTHING THAT ABRAHAM SAID TO GOD. He calls Him, "Lord God"--Adonai Jehovah. He recognizes by this name that Jehovah is his Master, his Owner. Therefore, it does not seem that we have bitterness, just great disappointment and disillusionment. THE LORD WAS BRINGING ABRAHAM TO SEE THE FUTILITY OF ANYTHING THAT MAN COULD DO WITH RESPECT TO THE FAR-REACHING PROMISES WHICH GOD HAD GIVEN TO HIM. ALL OF THIS WAS NECESSARY BEFORE GOD COULD CLARIFY THE GREATEST POINT IN SALVATION WITH REGARD TO MAN!

Abraham listened to God. He was reminded of the certainty of God's word. And he was convinced in a stronger way than ever before that God would do as He said.

And Moses writes, "And he believed in the Lord."

Note the emphasis: It does not simply say that the promise, or even that he believed the Lord, but "he believed IN the Lord," meaning that he not only believed the Lord BUT HE WAS ALSO TRUSTING THE LORD TO FULFILL HIS OWN PROMISE. There is a personal emphasis here between the Lord and Abraham which is extremely important.

What did the Lord do?

He put righteousness to Abraham's account. In the heavenly records Abraham stood clear in the courts of divine justice, and never again would he be charged with his sins. This is his guarantee of salvation!

What a marvelous truth! AND IT IS THE SAME TRUTH WHICH WAS PROCLAIMED BY PAUL AND THE OTHER APOSTLES FOLLOWING THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST--THE SAME TRUTH WHICH IS UNFOLDED SO CLEARLY FOR US IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS.

How wonderful it is to contemplate! The simplicity of it is almost too good to believe. Here the grace of God is revealed in its glory.

This is actually all we ever need to hear about this verse. Once is enough. But the truth of the Gospel has been so corrupted by men that we find it three times in the NT so that there can be no question as to what it really means.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS OF GENESIS 15:6.

A. Romans 4:3.

This is for the man, probably the Jew, who likes to go back to original sources (to Abraham), but who obviously has not read the OT book of Genesis clearly.

He is the man who will not believe that man has no work at all to do. He finds what he is looking for when he comes to circumcision.

To be sure Abraham was circumcised--BUT WHEN? Was it before, or after, Gen. 15.

It was after--in Gen. 17.

The question is then: What if something had happened to Abraham before Gen. 17? Would Gen. 15:6 still be true? ABSOLUTELY.

FROM THIS WE CAN ESTABLISH THEN A TRUTH. IT IS THIS --THAT IF CIRCUMCISION CANNOT STAND THE TEST, THEN NOTHING ELSE WILL!

B. Galatians 3:6.

This is for another man who had not read his OT carefully. He is not going to move just two chapters ahead, but 450 years--TO MOSES!

No one would deny that Moses was one of the greatest men of Scripture.

But this does not mean that what Moses said was of such importance that it supercedes everything that had been said before!

And here again we need to see the consequences of what we are doing. IF SALVATION IS THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES, THEN ABRAHAM, WHO DID NOT HAVE THE LAW, AND ISAAC, AND JACOB, AND JOSEPH WERE ALL LOST. IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN GOD CANNOT BE THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND OF ISAAC AND OF JACOB!

The Law was not added to faith! Faith stands alone as the sole condition of salvation, or we forever destroy the promises which were given to Abraham through his life.

C. James 2:23.

Here the picture is just the opposite from what we find in Romans and Galatians. THIS DEALS WITH THE MAN WHO HAS MISINTERPRETED FAITH! He takes it to mean that, just as nothing is necessary for salvation except faith, so nothing more needs to follow salvation except to say that you have believed!

He has not read the OT carefully either.

What does James do?

He cites GENESIS 15:6 (a thing he would never do if he were trying to teach salvation by works), and then goes on to Gen. 22 to show that for all genuine salvation there must be evidence.

Paul teaches this in Romans, and in Galatians. John teaches it in 1 John. Peter teaches it. The writer of Hebrews teaches it. The OT teaches it.

Conclusion: What do we have, then, when we gather together all of these verses?

We have this: MEN ARE JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN WHAT GOD HAD DONE FOR US THROUGH THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Nothing needs to be added to it--circumcision, the Law, baptism, church membership, tithing, works of any kind!

BUT--the reality of our faith will be seen in our lives. The man who has trusted Christ for salvation will go on trusting Him. The man who has been justified will have a different attitude toward sin, and a different experience. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.

God has made salvation possible to any person on the face of the earth. This is the one thing that all men can do. It forever takes the glory from man, and gives it to God where it belong. It is the only way (through grace) that a righteous God could possible have anything to do with sinful men.