

## Abraham, the Father of All Believers

## Lesson 9

Paul declares that Abraham is the father of all who believe (Rom 4:11). Abraham is the example to be followed by every believer; every believer is to “walk in the \_\_\_\_\_ of faith which our father Abraham [has walked]” (Rom 4:12). In His Word, God presents Abraham and his salvation experience to demonstrate both aspects of God’s plan of salvation.

The first aspect of God’s plan of salvation is “rescue” from sin. God reveals biblical doctrine through real historical events, and for Abraham, there was a certain day in his life when he was rescued from sin. Since Abraham is the father (example) of all those who believe, by examining this event in his life, one can understand how others can also be rescued from sin.

Concerning Abraham’s rescue from sin, two passages are essential: Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-6. In Genesis 12:1-3, God presents the gospel to Abraham:

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

Get out of your country from your family  
And from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.  
I will make you a great nation;  
I will bless you and make your name great;  
And you shall be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
And I will curse him who curses you;  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Paul declares that the phrase “in you all the nations shall be blessed” is the gospel \_\_\_\_\_ to Abraham (Gal 3:8). Paul explains that, although this gospel to Abraham is generally understood as describing the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, it is specifically describing the Seed of Abraham, the Messiah (cf. Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16). Thus, when Matthew details Jesus’ right to be the Messiah (Mt 1:1), He is not only called “the Son of David” but also “the Son of Abraham.”

The gospel presented to Abraham has the same essential message as the first gospel presented in Genesis 3:15: “God will send the Messiah.” The gospel to Abraham presents more information concerning the Messiah: He will be the Seed of Abraham and will bless all the families of the earth. The information that He will be the Seed of Abraham is new revelation; the promise that He will bless all the families of the earth confirms the first proclamation of the gospel, since Adam and Eve are the parents of all nations. (The promise that the Messiah will “bless all nations” gives a hint about a novel feature of the New Covenant—it will include Gentiles, cf. Gal 3:5-9).

The gospel has always been available to all people. Every human is a son or daughter of Adam and Eve. When Adam sinned, sin and death passed to his descendants, and every sinner needs a savior; thus, God’s gospel promises to provide for the rescue and restoration of mankind and creation through the Seed of the woman. Nevertheless, the gifts of salvation are given only to individuals who believe God’s gospel.

In Abraham’s case, he hears the gospel when God calls him to leave his homeland and his father’s house and go to the Promised Land (Gen 12:1-3), but the Bible does not record Abraham’s belief in the gospel until years later when he is living among the Canaanites. The historical context of Abraham’s belief is set after he rescues his nephew, Lot, and the five southern kings from being captives of the four northern kings; even so, he does not accept any rewards for his rescue of these kings and their people (Gen 14).

*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.*

– Romans 4:11-12

God’s promise to send the Messiah is the essence of the gospel

*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*

– Galatians 3:8

*And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman, and  
between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.*

– Genesis 3:15

*I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you say, “I have made Abram rich.”*

– Genesis 14:23

But Abram said, "LORD God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." – Genesis 15:2-5

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

– Romans 4:2-3

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
And whose sins are covered;  
Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."

– Romans 4:5-8

### God's Plan of Salvation

#### Rescue Aspect:

Abraham **believes** the gospel

#### Gifts of Salvation:

1. credit of righteousness
2. forgiveness of sin

After these events, God speaks to Abraham and makes promises to reward him (Gen 15:1). Abraham responds to God that his only heir is a servant named \_\_\_\_\_ and that the reward he desires is the promise which God had made years before: to give him seed, a son to be his heir (Gen 15:2-3).

God then promises that Eliezer will not be Abraham's heir, but "one who will come from your own \_\_\_\_\_" (Gen 15:4). God promises to give him more than just an heir, indeed, he will have many descendants, so numerous that he will not be "able to \_\_\_\_\_ them" (Gen 15:5). Here, God's promise to Abraham repeats and enlarges the promise of the gospel which was previously given to him (recorded in Genesis 12:3). Among Abraham's numerous descendants, one will be the promised Messiah.

What follows is one of the most important verses in the Bible:

And [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6).

This verse is the first time the Word of God uses the word "believe." The significance of this first mention of "believe" is that Abraham's belief is to be the example for every believer (Rom 4:11-12).

Paul writes about the importance of believing the gospel and "conclude[s] that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom 3:27). ("Justification" is essentially "righteousness.") Paul explains that Abraham was not justified by works in Genesis 15 because, if so, he would have something to \_\_\_\_\_ about (Rom 4:2). In this salvation event, Abraham's belief, not his works, "[is] accounted to him for righteousness" (Rom 4:3). The righteousness which comes from justification by faith is a gift of salvation which cannot be earned.

The history recorded in Genesis 15 (which is confirmed in Romans 4) reveals that, when Abraham believes God's gospel, he is given a credit of righteousness. According to Paul in Romans 4, in this salvation event Abraham is given another gift of salvation, specifically, forgiveness of sin. Paul quotes a psalm of David to demonstrate that, when someone believes the gospel, not only is that one given a credit of righteousness, but also his "lawless deeds are \_\_\_\_\_" (Rom 4:5-8). Rescue from sin is a gift of salvation which is given to everyone who is justified by faith.

While these two gifts of salvation, a credit of righteousness and forgiveness of sin, are given to all believers, some gifts of salvation pertain only to New Covenant believers (e.g., the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). In any case, none of the gifts of salvation can be earned through good works; they can only be received as a gift when someone believes the gospel (cf. Eph 2:8-9).

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1. How is Abraham related to all those who believe?

2. What is the new information revealed in the gospel given to Abraham?

3. In which Bible verse is "believe" mentioned for the first time; why?

4. What two gifts of salvation are given to Abraham when he is justified by faith?