

Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 10:33 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 4--The "Faith of Abraham"!

"For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness!"

Douglas Moo writes that many believers "have little idea about how their faith in Christ fits into the wider plan of God in history"! And so, the apostle Paul wrote Romans to clear that up for all time! He begins his discourse, in Romans 1:1-3, by declaring that he was "called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God--concerning His Son--which He (God) promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures"! And he (Paul) picks up this "gospel theme" in Romans 4--by using Abraham as the central figure in his understanding of "salvation history"--and by making it clear beyond question that Abraham was "credited with righteousness," i.e., "justified" before God, " or "saved," by faith alone, not by works, nor by "circumcision," nor by keeping the ten commandments, or the rest of the Law, or anything else he might have done!

Paul spent an entire chapter on Abraham, probably because he (Abraham) was so "venerated" by the Jewish people--and viewed as a model of "pious devotion" and "righteousness"! Yet Paul was quick to point out that it was not, in fact, his righteousness or good works that made him justified or accepted as righteous before God!

Galatians 2:16 says: "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified!"

The underlying "story line" of both the Old and New Testaments is the same! People in both eras, and to this day, are saved in the same way! By grace, through faith--and in Christ alone! Hebrews 11:13 indicates that Abraham and the other patriarchs, "all died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance."

And so we see the "gospel theme" of a coming Savior, Messiah, and Redeemer, who would rescue people from the curse and consequences of sin, reverberating throughout the Bible, beginning with the prophecy in Genesis 3:15, soon after the Fall, about the coming "seed" of a woman!

When God, in Genesis 22, asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son Isaac, on the altar, Abraham--on his way to Mt. Moriah--it is significant that he noted to Isaac "God would provide for Himself the lamb"! In addition, Hebrews 11:19 says he "considered that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he received him back even as a type"! What a beautiful picture of what Christ would later accomplish on the cross through His "substitutionary atonement"!

Job exclaimed (in Job 19:25), "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"! Moreover, the words from the prophet Isaiah (in Isaiah 53) form the core of the prophetic message about the "suffering Servant" who would be "wounded for our

transgressions and bruised for our iniquities!" This same prophet later (in Isaiah 61:10) would "greatly rejoice" after visualizing himself "clothed in the garments of salvation"!

And, of course, Paul--back to our text in Romans 4--quotes from Psalm 32 about how David had spoken of the "blessings on the man to whom God "credits righteousness apart from works...and on those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven...whose sins are covered...and whose sin the Lord will not take into account!"

Therefore, we see that in Old Testament times--even before Christ came into this world--there was a key connection between salvation and faith in a coming Savior--as elementary as it might have been, and based on the God-given revelation they had been given at the time!

Peter wrote that it was "of this salvation that the prophets inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow! To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the thing which now have been reported to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from God!"

Jesus Himself, appearing to two of His followers--after His resurrection--on the road to Emmaus, reprimanded those who were "slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets had spoken," and how it was "necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory!" And then, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures!" (Luke 24:25-27)

Hank Hanegraaff has noted, "Jesus Christ stands at the apex of history! And just as we look back in history to Christ's sacrifice for our sins on the cross, Old Testament believers looked forward to His sacrifice for them!"

We know, of course, that God has a different sense of "timing" than we have! An eternal perspective! Ephesians 1:4 says, "God has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world..." That includes both Old and New Testament "saints" as well as us today!

Ephesians 2:8-9--amplifying the message of Romans 4--says: "For by grace are we saved through faith and that not of ourselves! It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast!"

What a message of God's grace--and His plan of redemption--and not just in Paul's writings in Romans, but in the entire Bible! All of which should give us a wider view of "salvation history" and the great "story line" of the Bible!

Well, that is also a great Christmas story, isn't it?

Merry Christmas, men! See you on January 9th, when we move on to Romans 5!

Lowell