

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: what shall we say... that Abraham...has found?****what shall we say... that Abraham...has found? - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/20 14:25**

Perhaps a better way to discover the experience of the OT saints is to start with them rather than reverse-engineer NT statements. We are fortunate in this as Paul asks exactly the question we are trying to answer. What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (Rom 4:1 KJV) Most people are familiar with the story about Archimedes and his bathnight, and of him running through the town crying 'eureka'. It is the same word used here by Paul of Abraham. What did Abraham discover? What was his experience?

The first stone in the foundation is 'justification by faith'. This is also the foundation of the Reformation. Without going through the whole Abraham thing again let's take a brief look. Abraham 'discovered' or 'experienced' justification by faith. This occurred a long time after his call from Ur, and a long time after he had received wonderful promises from God. His story begins in Genesis 11 and includes many critical choices before we get to his experience of 'justification by faith' in Gen 15:6.

This itself is worth considering. I suppose the Wesleyans would call this 'pre-venient' grace. The grace that comes to us before Grace gets to us. They were all wonderful and important preparations of the man. There are many steps before we get to the first step, apparently.

The Hebrew word for 'believe' (the verb), and 'faith' (the noun) is first used in Genesis 15:6. 'Abraham believed in Jehovah' says the verse. It is the word 'aman' or 'amen'. The next time the Bible uses the word is also helpful. It is used in the story of Joseph and his brothers. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so. (Gen 42:20 KJV) The sense comes through very plainly. It has the sense of 'agree' or 'endorse'. God spoke and Abraham 'agreed' or 'endorsed' what God had said. Abraham, to use the language of the NT was 'putting his seal to it that God' was true. (He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. (Joh 3:33 KJV))

Consequently 'faith' cannot exist without 'revelation' because 'faith' is a personal response to 'revelation' in the affirmative. Faith comes by hearing... the word of God. Abraham heard what God had said and 'received His testimony'. He put his public approval, his official seal, on it. There is an old A B Simpson hymn which has this chorus; I take the hand of I ove divine.

I claim the faithful promise mine,
And add to His my countersign,

I take, He undertakes. It comes from the days when banking law insisted that the recipient 'countersign' a cheque before the funds passed into his account. The recipient added his signature on the reverse side of the cheque, by way of receipt. Without the 'countersign' the cheque remained only a promise and the recipient was none the richer. It is a beautiful illustration; it's a pity they changed the banking laws! (actually some companies insist that large cheques are countersigned by the recipient before passing to the recipient's account, but it is no longer law.)

Abraham believed in Jehovah. He agreed with the testimony he heard and endorsed it. He added his countersignature and the funds passed into his account. This is authentic faith. Not the yielding to a personal worker's arguments and finally praying the prayer, but hearing God and putting your own signature alongside His in conscious receipt of His promise.

When we speak of 'justification by faith' it is vital that we understand that it is this kind of 'faith' we are talking about. The Bible does not teach 'justification by decision', or 'justification by praying the sinner's prayer, or 'justification by going through an Alpha course'; it teaches justification by Abraham's kind of faith. Without this kind of faith there is no transaction and no transfer of funds. This is a vital truth.

The first thing we need to understand about 'what Abraham found' is that he was a 24 carat believer in what God had said to him.

Re: what shall we say... that Abraham...has found? - posted by couch (), on: 2005/4/20 15:53

Ron,

I feel this is a very timely message for many of us on the Narrow Path. Unless we keep our eyes fixed and our ear attentive to the Master's words, how can we then follow? May we receive those words, countersign them, and walk in the promises of fellowship with our dear Savior, no matter what "season of life" we may find ourselves in.

Amazing to me that the very first word of the Shema, the greatest commandment, is the word "Hear.."

May we be found so doing...

Re: what shall we say... that Abraham...has found? - posted by RobertW (), on: 2005/4/20 16:24

Quote:
-----The first thing we need to understand about 'what Abraham found' is that he was a 24 carat believer in what God had said to him.

I really miss the Abraham My Friend series.

Re: the faith of Abraham - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/21 15:11

A little later into Romans 4 Paul says Rom 4:16 KJV 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, We sometimes call this 'justifying faith'. It is a unique kind of faith where a man or woman puts their whole life and destiny on the line. There is nothing tentative about this kind of faith; it is life or death faith. It is faith without a plan B; an 'all your eggs in one basket' faith. We might call it Abrahamic Faith.

The point I want to make is that Abrahamic Faith preceded the Abrahamic Covenant. According to Genesis 15:6 Abraham believed in Jehovah; and Jehovah counted to him as righteousness. Later in the chapter there is a reference to a covenant that God made with Abraham in relation to the land and Abraham's unborn son, but the personal covenant with Abraham was some years later; at least 12.

At the time of Genesis 15:6 and the land covenant the man's name was really Abram. There followed a disastrous diversion in Genesis 16 and 12 silent years before God spoke again. Genesis 17 is the account of the covenant between God and Abram. God changed his name; a tradition often used by conquering kings at that time. The changed name was prophetic but also indicative of Jehovah's absolute rule over the man.

At this time 'circumcision' was introduced with the words; Gen 17:11 KJV And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Covenants sometimes included 'covenant signs'. The 'sign' of the covenant between God and all sentient life is the rainbow; Genesis Gen 9:12-15 KJV And God said, This is th e token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: (13) I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. (14) And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: (15) And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. where the same word 'token' is used.

So circumcision was a 'sign' or 'token' of something in its inception. Paul takes this up in Romans 4 as he expounds 'what Abraham our father... found'. Rom 4:11 KJV 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: The NT gives us definitive expositions of the OT. The sign was an outward evidence of an inward reality. Abraham 'had' something and the thing he had was the 'righteousness of faith'. Abraham's righteousness was not an acquisition or his own achievement but was 'righteousness' credited to his account at the time of his faith. Abraham believed Jehovah, and He counted to him as righteousness. If you are trying to follow this I suggest you read it in a version like the ASV or NASB which sticks to the word 'reckoned/credited' throughout. Our KJV uses 'counted', 'reckoned', and 'imputed' within the space of 3/4 verses where the original has the same word. Here is the ASV and the NASB; Rom 4:3-6 ASV For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it wa

s reckoned unto him for righteousness. (4) Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. (6) Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works,

Rom 4:3-6 NASB For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." (4) Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. (5) But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, (6) just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: Abraham received 'the sign of circumcision' as a brand in his body that the transaction had been enacted and that 'righteousness' had passed to his account. This new relationship between God and Abraham is what Stephen called 'the covenant of circumcision'. (Acts 7:8)

For the time being we should pause here. Abraham received 'the covenant of circumcision' approximately 13 years after he was justified by faith. Now I am not trying to set up a schedule for God's dealings in our lives, but just pointing out that there is a difference between justification by faith and a covenant. We cannot presume that because someone is justified by faith they are automatically included in a covenant. The distinctive thing about Abraham was that ultimately he bore in his body his Master's mark. This mark from God's perspective said 'Mine'; from Abraham's perspective it said 'His'.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/21 18:02

Br. Ron wrote:

Quote:

----- The sign was an outward evidence of an inward reality.

What is the substance of the inward reality that you mention here?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/21 18:29

Quote:

-----What is the substance of the inward reality that you mention here?

Sorry, I don't understand the question. What do you mean by substance? The inward reality was his faith.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/22 13:20

Faith is the substance hoped for. What is that substance that creates our faith. Does it come from the carnal man or from God?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by roman, on: 2005/4/29 4:04

To: Ron B

What you shared is very interesting. But I hope you wouldn't mind if I raise a question.

You wrote:

"We cannot presume that because someone is justified by faith they are automatically included in a covenant."

May I know what are you implying in this statement?

Thanks much Bro.

Roman

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2005/4/29 15:58

I asked this question to anyone who will hear?

Quote:
-----Faith is the substance hoped for. What is that substance that creates our faith. Does it come from the carnal man or from God?

Listen for the source from which all grace flows.

7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
9 For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.
10 Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

OT Scripture says, "For with You is the fountain of life, In Your light we see light."

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Faith is the substance hoped for, Jesus is that substance. "...we have access by faith into this grace, in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Amen, Glory be to God.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/29 16:36

Hi Roman

I was making the point that Abraham was justified by faith, and had righteousness reckoned to him, before being in covenant with God. God's kindness does not only extend to those within covenant, although His choicest blessings are reserved for those who are. Of course those within covenant receive His mercy too, but justification by faith is not dependent upon being in covenant with God; or so the story of Abraham would indicate.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/5/4 11:05

..to continue...

is when we are in covenant with God that He calls us 'His'.

Quote:
-----Â“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine:Â” (Ex. 19:5, ASV)

see also Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; Ezek. 36:28 In this stronger sense even 'my people' have to become 'my people'.

Quote:
-----Â“And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;Â” (Ex. 3:7, KJV)

Â“And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.Â” (Lev. 26:12, KJV)

Â“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.Â”
(Jer. 24:7, KJV)
