

Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #8 | Genesis 15:6 | Was Abraham Saved Just Like We Are?

The Common Interpretation

- It is commonly taught that this passage proves that “Old Testament Saints” were saved in the exact manner as we are, other than the fact that their faith was forward looking and ours looks back to the cross.
- The motivation for this desire depends on one’s theological perspective:
 - Covenant theology: to prove that there are no dispensations, but that everyone since Adam is saved under the so-called “Covenant of Grace” (which is a theological presupposition, not a Biblically stated covenant).
 - Dispensational theology: to defend against the charge of a “dual covenant” or any kind of salvation by works.
- Some examples:
 - Matthew Henry: “All believers are justified as Abram was, and it was his faith that was counted to him for righteousness.”
 - Got Questions.org: “If the Old Testament way of salvation was not keeping the Law, then how were people saved? Fortunately, the answer to that question is easily found in Scripture, so there can be no doubt as to what was the Old Testament way of salvation. In Romans 4 the apostle Paul makes it very clear that the Old Testament way of salvation was the same as the New Testament way, which is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. To prove this, Paul points us to Abraham, who was saved by faith: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3).”

The Content of the Text Itself

- Verse 1 – God appeared to Abram in a vision and told Abram that He would be his **exceeding great reward**. The context: Abram’s tithe to Melchizedek and battle with the King of Sodom.
- Verses 2-3 – Abram told God that any reward He should give him would end up in the hands of Eliezer of Damascus, for he had no child.
- Verses 4-5 – God told Abram that Eliezer would not be the heir, but one who **shall come forth out of thine own bowels**. Furthermore, Abram’s descendants would be innumerable, as the stars.
- Verse 6 – Abram believed God, and God declared his belief as sufficient, no other work or response was required.

- Verses 7-21 – God reiterated the promise of the land, and Abram brought sacrifices which the Lord used to seal the land covenant.

The Problem of Other Texts

- Several passages of Scripture mess up the “narrative” of the common interpretation, including:
 - Psalm 106:30-31
 - Deuteronomy 6:25, 24:10-13
 - Romans 2:13 (see also Romans 5:1).

Does Paul’s use of the Text Prove the Common Interpretation?

- In Romans 4:3 Paul quotes Genesis 15:6. Most teachers use this as evidence that Old Testament Saints were saved by grace, through faith.
- In fact, Romans 4:1-8 gives two Jewish examples that faith was at the heart of two of the covenants to the Jews; the Abrahamic and the Davidic. Paul used these two examples to show the precedent for “by faith without works” in this new dispensation of individual salvation.
- Darby: “The **principle is set forth** and faith counted for righteousness while Abram believed God.” [emphasis mine].

What is the problem in believing that all people were always saved the same way?

- Nothing in Scripture indicates that those in the Old Testament had a knowledge of, nor a faith in, the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - To argue that they did have such an understanding is pure speculation.
 - To argue that someone could be saved without such an understanding is pure heresy.
- Such an assumption disregards the real meaning and requirements of the Law. The Law was a “schoolmaster” to protect the nation of Israel until the time of *by grace through faith* came.
- Such an assumption causes one to conclude that the Apostles were not saved. (Lk 9:44-45, 18:34, Mk 9:31-32, Jn 12:16).
- Such an assumption is against every principle of dispensationalism.

The Solution

- The fatal flaw is that almost everyone assumes that *salvation then was the same as today*.
- This fails to recognize that in the Old Testament, salvation was *national and future*. New Testament salvation is a New Testament thing!
- The Old Testament saints were not saved in the same way because they were not saved the same way!