

I. Introduction.

II. Abraham, like you, was justified by faith alone. v. 6 Gen. 15:6

A. It is important to understand where this declaration fits into the life of Abraham.

1. The LORD had called Abraham to leave Ur to live as a sojourner in Canaan, and had given Abraham great promises. Gen. 12:1-3 Heb. 11:8-10 Gal. 1:4
2. After many years and some adventures, the LORD appeared again to Abraham and reaffirmed the promises. Gen. 15:1-5
3. Abraham believed in the LORD. Gen. 15:6
4. The LORD then ratified the covenant. Gen. 15:7-21
5. Many years later the Lord gives the covenant sign (circumcision). Gen. 17:1ff
6. Then Isaac is born in fulfillment of the promises. Gen. 21:1ff
7. Finally, Abraham's faith is tested and proven. Gen. 22:1ff Heb. 11:17-19

B. Abraham believed God.

1. Faith is the means by which Abraham laid hold of God's promise. Ro. 4:20-22
2. Not everything called faith is saving faith. Js. 2:19
3. What was the content of Abraham's faith? v. 8 3:13-14,16 Gen. 22:1ff 3:15 Jo. 8:56 Heb. 11:17-19 Ro. 4:17-22 2 Co. 1:20 1 Pe. 1:10-12

C. Abraham was counted righteous.

1. Jewish scholars claim that Abraham was justified because of his faithful works.
2. When you consider Abraham's history, you know that he was not saved by his works. Rom. 4:1-4 Gen. 12:10ff 16:1ff 20:1ff Josh. 24:2-3
3. Nor was Abraham declared righteous based upon the great merit of his faith.
4. It is not that righteousness was infused into Abraham, producing an ethical transformation. 16:1ff
5. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham the sinner who was graciously given perfect status before God. Rom. 4:5
6. From where did Abraham get this perfect righteousness? 3:13 1:4 Rom. 3:23-26

D. What is the relationship between Abraham's faith and his works?

1. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised and before he did his great work of faith (see below). Gen. 15:6 17:1ff 22:1ff
2. Abraham's obedience flowed from his faith. Gen. 22:1ff Heb. 11:8-10,17-19 Js. 2:14-26

E. That which happened to Abraham has happened to you. 2:16 Ro. 4:22-25

1. You heard the promise of God (the gospel). 3:1 Acts 16:30-31 Rom. 4:24-25
2. You believed God.
3. You were reckoned by God as righteous through Christ. Phil. 3:9 2 Cor. 5:21
4. You demonstrate your faith by how you live. John 8:39

III. All who have faith like Abraham are sons of Abraham. v. 7-9

A. Those who are of faith are the true sons and heirs of Abraham. v. 7

1. The Judaizers said that Gentile believers must become Jews (through circumcision) in order to participate in the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Acts 15:1,5
2. It is significant that Abraham was declared righteous years before the sign of circumcision was given. Gen. 15:6 17:1ff Ro. 4:10-13

- B. The Scripture foresaw the inclusion of the Gentiles by faith in the gospel. v. 8 Ge. 12:3**
1. God's promises to Abraham included blessing to the nations. Gen. 12:3 18:8 22:18
 2. Paul says that the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham.
 3. These promises were repeated throughout Israel's history. Isa. 56:6 2:2-4
Rom. 10:18ff Ps. 2:10-12 72:17 Hos. 1:10 2:23
 4. The gospel of Jesus Christ (including the evangelization of the Gentiles) is not God's plan B. 1:16 2:18 Eph. 1:3-11
 5. God has always saved by faith and has only saved by faith. Ps. 32:1ff Hab. 2:4
Rom. 4:6-8 1:17 3:20ff
- C. Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. v. 9**
1. Everyone who shares Abraham's faith shares in God's blessing to Abraham. 3:29
 2. Those who do not believe are not true sons and heirs (and are under a curse). 3:10
 3. Membership in Abraham's family is not hereditary. John 8:33,39 Mt. 3:9
Luke 3:8 Rom. 9:7-8 2:28-29
- D. What are the blessings of Abraham and who receives them?**
1. Abraham's physical offspring received many of the blessings in a typical outward sense under the Old Covenant – multitudes of offspring, land, nation. Gen. 12:1-3
 2. New Covenant believers enjoy the spiritual fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessing. 3:29,16 Heb. 11:10,16 12:22-24 13:14 Rom. 4:13 1 Pet. 2:5,9-10 Rev. 7:9-12 5:9
 3. The greatest blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant is justification by faith alone (for all nations), from which all the other blessings flow. v. 8-9,5
- E. Who are the children of Abraham today?**
1. Under the Old Covenant one could be a child of Abraham in an external sense without being a child of Abraham spiritually.
 2. Does the New Covenant also include non-believing children of Abraham?
 3. Are unbelieving Jews children of Abraham and heirs of the promises? 3:29
Rom. 11:1ff 4:13 Eph. 2:11ff
 4. Are the children of believers sons of Abraham and heirs of the covenant promises?
 5. Only those who have personally believed are the children of Abraham and are eligible to receive the signs (baptism and the Lord's Supper) of the New Covenant.

IV. Conclusion.

Discussion questions

1. Why does Paul use the example of Abraham? How did his opponents use Abraham?
2. What is the nature and content of Abraham's saving faith? How much did he understand?
3. How would you answer someone who said that Abraham was declared righteous because he was so faithful to God? Or that Abraham's faith earned his justification?
4. What is the relationship between Abraham's faith and his works?
5. How is the experience of every believer like that of Abraham?
6. How would you answer someone who claims that God has saved in different ways during different eras?
7. What is the significance of the fact that Abraham was declared righteous before his circumcision and before he was asked to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice?
8. What are the blessings to Abraham?
9. Who are the children and heirs of Abraham in our day?
Are Abraham's physical descendants his heirs?
Are the children of believers automatically included in the Abrahamic covenant?
10. How does our definition of the sons of Abraham affect our view of baptism?