

Online Grace Bible School

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 4
The Faith of our Fathers**

1) Abraham – Justified by Faith

Rom.4:1-3. Abraham stands in a special relationship to believers. He is referred to as our 'father' and we as his 'sons' (Rom.4:11, 16). *'Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham'* (Gal.3:7).

- ✓ Paul asks: 'What has Abraham our father found or attained by the works of the flesh?' i.e. by self-effort. If Abraham's righteousness was based on his works he would have something to boast about.
- ✓ But what does the Scripture say? Gen.15:6. First mention of justification by faith. Imputed – put into one's account. Transfer of debt or credit. Abraham didn't understand justification fully; but he saw it.

Justification is Paul's way of telling the gospel. The NT uses many terms – saved, forgiven our sins, reconciled to God, redeemed, etc. But 'justification' is the most explicit. Its message is that God has forgiven all our sins and imputed righteousness to us not on the basis of our works but the propitiation of Jesus, Rom.3:23-26.

What is justification? It's the result of a forensic process. It is a legal pronouncement in which a person is declared righteous after a trial or investigation in which all evidence is examined. Opposite of condemnation.

But it is not a judgment concerning our character. God justifies the *ungodly*. Justification precedes sanctification. E.g. Abraham. But God justified him the moment he believed though he was not always godly.

How can God justify the ungodly? He demonstrates His righteousness in doing so, Rom.3:25-26. The righteousness of God is revealed through the Cross, Rom.3:21-26.

Abraham believed this - Christ was revealed as his righteousness, Jn.8:56; Gal.3:8, 16; Matt.1:1.

When you come to God seeking His forgiveness do you appeal to His mercy or justice? See 1 John 1:9. For God to forgive us is just. We don't plead for mercy. See Rom.3:26. We are justified, not mercified.

When we sin we don't need someone to make us feel good. We need a lawyer who can successfully argue that justice has been fulfilled. See 1 Jn.2:1-2. In Christ the condemning voice of the law is silenced forever.

- ✓ We are reconciled to God and no longer exposed to His wrath.
- ✓ We are justified from all things, Acts 13:39.
- ✓ This righteousness takes out of the courtroom and brings us into the family of God.
- ✓ We are qualified for every blessing.

Justified by faith

- ✓ We are justified by faith, as Abraham was, Rom.4:3, 5, 9, 16, 24-25.
- ✓ Faith is not sight. It enables us to call those things which are not as though they are, Rom. 4:17-19. We should call ourselves not as we see ourselves but as God calls us – righteous, holy, perfect, complete, etc.
- ✓ Abraham gave glory to God, as the God of truth, Rom.4:20. This is an important aspect to our understanding of faith – it's not what it says about you or me, but what it says about God.

2) Isaac – A Son and an Heir

Gen.15:2-4. The key relating to Isaac is sonship. He was the long-promised, long-awaited son of Abraham and Sarah. But in a period of doubt Abraham almost appointed Eliezer, his servant, as heir. But this was not acceptable to God. God promised a son. God builds with sons, not servants.

After justification (Abraham) we have been placed alongside Christ Himself in the matter of sonship (Isaac). He is our Elder Brother, Heb.2:10-11; Rom.8:29.

- ✓ Sons are heirs. Everything Isaac had he inherited from Abraham, because he was his son: *'And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has'* (Gen.24:36). *'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together'* (Rom.8:16-17).
- ✓ We are heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with Christ Himself, giving us a title to our spiritual inheritance. *'And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac'* (Gen.25:5).
- ✓ Next chapter (Gen.16): The birth of Ishmael to Abraham through a bondwoman.
- ✓ Another lapse of faith; another attempt to pass the inheritance to a servant.
- ✓ See the significance of this - Gal.4:21-28. Two covenants: law and grace.
- ✓ You will never inherit the promises by law; only by grace, i.e. not as servants; but as sons.
- ✓ Many Christians have a servant mentality; i.e. they think they can merit blessings through service. This produces a servile spirit, which manifests itself through striving and fear.
- ✓ Once justified, our position is that of sons of God. Our blessings are based on this, John 8:35.

Gal.4:29-5:1. So Ishmael was born to Abraham from his unsanctioned relationship with Hagar, Sarah's maid.

- ✓ He was not a son in a covenant sense; he was illegitimate, characterized by his lack of discipline.
- ✓ A father does not chasten an illegitimate son for he has no vision or plans for him.
- ✓ On the other hand he has an interest in his true sons and has a purpose for them. He will ensure this purpose is not thwarted by their misbehavior and will therefore lovingly correct them, Heb.12:7-8.
- ✓ We are free from a servile spirit. When we are disciplined we know it is from a Father Who loves us.

Servants. God's OC people were under the of the law, depicted by the pedagogue in NT times, Gal.3:23-24; Gal.4:1-2. But there was a specific time when the child was officially adopted into his father's family. He was no longer a 'child' but a 'son'. The Cross was the time when God's people became sons, Gal.4:4-5.

This was characterized by:

- 1) Freedom from the pedagogue (law), *'...after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor'* (Gal.3:25).
- 2) Intimacy with the Father, *'you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus'* (Gal.3:26).

We are dead to the law and alive to the Spirit

- ✓ Those with a servant mentality marry themselves to the law; those who are sons are led by the Spirit, Rom.8:14-15. For the believer the Holy Spirit has taken the place of the law, Gal.5:18.
- ✓ It is not good that those who are now of sons should relate to the Father through the law, Gal.4:9-11
- ✓ A servant mentality is not only characterized by laws but also by dependence on law-givers. People with a servant mentality always need someone to tell them what to do.
- ✓ The less we understand what it means to be sons the more we will behave like servants.

The status of sonship is characterized by intimacy with the Father

- ✓ Under the NC there is a new level of intimacy based on a new kind of relationship. There is no human mediator between us and God, Heb.8:11.
- ✓ The status of sonship is characterized by intimacy with the Father. The Spirit helps us to feel like sons, even like Jesus Himself, in the presence of the Father.

3) Jacob – Spirit vs Flesh

Jacob means cunning; heel-catcher: to go behind the back; act in deceit. This was prophetic of what would be his dominant trait. He would deceive and manipulate to get his way. He would trust in the flesh.

Jacob is a testimony of the power of God's grace to transform. The purpose of God is that we who have been justified (Abraham) and made sons (Isaac) be transformed into an *Israel* (a prince with God), as Jacob was, by God's grace. How did God transform him? How does He transform us?

1) By a process of gradual transformation (not crisis encounters)

- ✓ Jacob had to run from Esau. He had an encounter with God. The dream reassured him that there was no need to manipulate; he could trust God. But he responded to grace with flesh not faith.
- ✓ After the divine encounter Jacob was greatly encouraged but not changed. Many Christian meetings are aimed at bringing people to a crisis encounter at an altar call, but it is seldom lives are changed this way.
- ✓ We have already received everything for life and godliness. Sanctification is a gradual process by which we learn to walk in the Spirit (by faith) and work out what God has worked into us, 2 Cor.3:18.

2) By the law of sowing and reaping

God showed him the fruits of both sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit.

- ✓ Sowing to the flesh. How do you think he felt waking up the morning after his wedding night and discovered Leah, not Rachel, in his bed? Probably the same way Isaac felt when he discovered that it wasn't Esau but Jacob that he was blessing! The deceiver is deceived.
- ✓ Sowing to the Spirit. With God's help and by clever selective breeding Jacob ensured reproduction of the animals with abnormalities, given to him by Laban, Gen.31:11-12, 42. Jacob eventually developed his own flock; much bigger than Laban's. He saw the blessing of working with God.

3) By making all things work together for good

- ✓ Gen.29:31&32. With Leah, Jacob's 'accidental' wife, God began to build the house of Israel. From her came Levi (the priesthood), and Judah (the royal line of Israel). She gave him 6 sons and 2 more through her handmaiden. And it was Leah who lived on with Jacob in his latter days as his help and support.
- ✓ Jacob stayed with Laban another 6 years after he married Rachel; 20 years in total with Laban. He was learning that he was not in control; he could not work things out through the flesh.
- ✓ Things were not so pleasant now between the two men (Gen.31:2). God used the friction between them to get Jacob to return to the Promised Land.
- ✓ It's easy to look at those 20 years from a human viewpoint and regard them as wasted years. But in the midst of the deception, rivalry, jealousy and bargaining God was working out His purposes (**Rom.8:28**).

4) By bringing us to the end of ourselves

- ✓ The problem was that he had nowhere to flee but back into the face of Esau. The last time he saw Esau he vowed he would kill Jacob. As he made his journey home he was still scheming. He planned how he would attempt to appease Esau with a gift (32:13-20). He still leaned upon his own understanding.
- ✓ A 'Man' (Gen.32:24), or 'Angel' (Hos.12:3&4), or God (Gen.32:30) appeared to him and began to wrestle with him. Why? Jacob had been working independently of God and now God has one purpose - to exhaust him, to bring him to an end of himself. Note, Jacob did not wrestle with the Angel but the Angel with Jacob. All Jacob could do was to cling to him. The Angel told him to let Him go. Jacob protested, 'I will not let you go until you bless me'. He finally came to an end of himself.
- ✓ God touched the socket of his hip and it became dislocated. From this moment he walked it was with a limp. His lameness would remind him not to scheme, nor manipulate but to trust God. John Newton. Through faith in God he would prevail. His name was changed to *Israel* - a prince with God, Gen. 33:20.
- ✓ Jacob's muscle shrank (Gen.32:32), (not removed). The flesh is never removed. The flesh will always be there wanting to scheme and take control. For Jacob, however, the flesh had shrunk. The Spirit was now supreme, and was reigning in Jacob's life. His confidence was in God, not in his ability to manipulate.
- ✓ He was a prince with God. At this point 'the sun rose on him' (Gen.32:31).

4) Joseph – Suffering with Christ, the Pathway to Reigning with Him

God destined great things for Joseph which were revealed in dreams. His family would bow before him. We who have been justified by faith, made sons of God, and are being transformed into the image of Christ, are destined to reign with Christ in the Kingdom (Lk.12:32; 1 Cor.6:3; Rev.2:26; 3:21).

But the route to reigning is via suffering (Rom.8:16-17). All the OT predictions concerning Jesus can be divided into 2 groups, His sufferings and the glory which was to follow (1 Pet.1:10-11; Lk.24:26). Paul desired to identify with Him in these 2 things (Phil.3:10-11). The 'fellowship' of sufferings draw us closer to Jesus.

The sufferings Joseph incurred include the following:

Betrayal by Brethren

- ✓ Because of his dreams and the coat of many colours, Joseph's brothers hated him.
- ✓ They planned to kill him; but he was sold as a slave into Egypt.

False Accusations

- ✓ The Lord was with Joseph though circumstances pointed to opposite.
- ✓ He was a slave to Potiphar. Potiphar's wife, frustrated sexually, had wandering eyes.
- ✓ Joseph rejected her advances because he loved the Lord.
- ✓ Scorned, she accused him of attempted rape and Joseph ended up in (political) prison.

Imprisonment

- ✓ Joseph went to prison for doing what was right, 1 Pet.2:20; 4:14.
- ✓ You may be judged wrongly and others believe it! God's goal for you is greater than your vindication.
- ✓ Jesus was never vindicated on earth. If Jesus were vindicated at His trial we would be on our way to hell.

Broken Promises

- ✓ Pharaoh's & baker were also imprisoned. Both had a dream, which Joseph interpreted.
- ✓ Everything he predicted came to pass. The butler promised to speak on Joseph's behalf but forgot him.
- ✓ If God was with Joseph why did he suffer? He was being chastened.
- ✓ Chastisement is not always directly linked to our behavior. Son-training is a better translation.
- ✓ It is God's education, nurture and discipline. Some of God's most obedient children suffer the most.
- ✓ The problem is we think we have been forgotten. We must wait God's timing. *'He has made everything beautiful in His time'* (Ecc.3:11).
- ✓ If Joseph had got out of prison then he would have gone home, Isa.64:4; Isa.25:9.
- ✓ The butler's dream fulfilled in 3 days; Joseph's dream in 13 years. The bigger the dream the longer the preparation. 1 Pet.5:6.
- ✓ Two years later Pharaoh had 2 dreams. The butler remembered Joseph.
- ✓ Joseph predicts the time of plenty followed by severe famine.
- ✓ Pharaoh was amazed and impressed with his interpretation and his wise counsel. He was exalted to the position of overseeing the whole land – second only to Pharaoh.
- ✓ The famine was not just in Egypt but all lands. This prepared the way for Joseph's family to come to him. He had 2 sons. Manasseh = Forgetting; Ephraim = Fruitful.
- ✓ Joseph is a type of Christ. His name means 'adding'. He was his father's beloved son - sent to his brethren but hated by them - he foretold his future exaltation - was innocent but suffered unjustly - was given over to the power of the Gentiles and numbered with the transgressors - was falsely accused and condemned. But then, suddenly, he was exalted to the throne and given a name that was above every name received a new name - every knee bowed to him – he was given a wife - he became the Bread of life; a Saviour for all people - was made known to his brethren a second time - they bowed before him.
- ✓ Note the order. 2 Tim.2:11-12; Rom.8:17-18.
- ✓ Some of God's preparation for us do not relate to time but eternity. Lk.22:28-30; 2 Cor.4:17; Rom.8:18; Heb.2:5, 10; 2 Thes.1:4-5; 1 Pet.4:12-13.