

Lesson 10: Abraham A Picture of How to be right with God!

Review

Review our events:

Previously: Preparation and background for the teachers and parents for teaching about justification.

Key Concept: We are Declared Righteous we are not made righteous.

God imputes righteousness He does not Impart righteousness.

Rom. 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Slide 4

Rom. 5:18 ¶ Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in declaration of righteousness for life. [*RD]

δικαίωσις *dikaiōsis* fem sing acc justification, to declare just, to declare righteous

Introduction

One of the most important questions that we must answer is one that is asked by one of Job's friends.

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Job 25:4 How then can man be righteous before God?

Slide 7

Justification: God declared Abraham righteous as the pattern for how everyone is justified.^{[L][SEP]}

SLIDE 8

Outline

1. **Faith:** Abraham chose to believe God and that was the basis for his justification
 - a. How did Abraham come to know about YHWH?
 - b. When did Abraham first believe God's promise of salvation as it was revealed in early Genesis?

c. What does it mean that Abraham believed in YHWH?

d. What does it mean that the Lord “counted” him as righteous? (also address the issue of the NLT translation “because” of his faith)

2. Abraham, friend of God

3. Lessons from Abraham’s life and God’s covenant with Him.

1. Faith: Abraham chose to believe God and that was the basis for his justification

Abraham grew up in a culture where the moon god was worshipped. The pagan beliefs at that time were that gods ruled in certain areas only. Moving out of a particular god’s area meant they would lose that god’s protection.

When God first called Abraham to leave Ur, Abraham packed up and left. Even before God made any official covenant with him, Abraham had already believed God and His promise for a future salvation. (We will explain how we know this as we study the lesson.)

SLIDE 9

Gen. 15:6 ¶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

However, this passage often confuses some people because it is not recorded in Scripture until four chapters into the story of Abraham. The Bible sometimes does not record events in chronological order as we would right the story today. So we must answer several important questions to help us understand this.

SLIDE 10

a. How did Abraham come to know about YHWH?

b. When did Abraham first believe God’s promise of salvation as it was revealed in early Genesis?

c. What does it mean that Abraham believed in YHWH?

d. What does it mean that the Lord “counted” him as righteous? (also address the issue of the NLT translation “because” of his faith)

a. How did Abraham come to know about YHWH?

The Bible tells us that God reveals Himself to all mankind through two ways: a non-verbal revelation through the evidence of His creation; or a verbal way through His personal revelation through an angel, Himself, a prophet, or someone who is already a believer.

By either observation of God's creation (Psa 19:1; Rom 1:19-21) or through another believer in YHWH, Abram learned of the Gen 3:15 promise.

Psa. 19:1 ¶ The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Psa. 19:2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.

Rom. 1:19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.

Rom. 1:20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Rom. 1:21 ¶ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

When we develop as a child or young person, we come to a time which varies from person to person or culture to culture, when we become aware of the physical world around us and begin to wonder where we came from? Where did the world and universe come from? What is our purpose in life? At this time we may chose to seek more and to find out who or what is out there? Who made us and why? We want to know about the Creator. But sinful man often decides to think it is something in nature, so they being to worship nature, God's creation and they worship the creation instead of the Creator.

Rom. 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Rom. 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Rom. 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Many of the people in Abraham's hometown worshipped creation, they worshipped the moon God.

But apparently Abraham wanted to know more, so God who knows all things and is just, must have sent someone to tell him. But we are not given this information only that this had happened at some unknown time in the past.

God will always send someone to tell those who want to know more about Him. God desires all to be saved.

1Tim. 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

1Tim. 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

b. When did Abraham first believe God’s promise of salvation as it was revealed in early Genesis?

How do we know that Abraham’s belief in YHWH was in the past?

There are two reasons. The first is that in the way Hebrew grammar works, one verb form is used to tell a story. It would read something like: “Then this happened and then this happened and then this.” One event is described after another.

But sometimes the writer wants to remind the reader of something or insert a statement of his own, so he shifts to a different tense. It shows a break in the action and is often designed to remind the reader of something that has already happened. This is how Gen 15:6 is written. It does not follow sequentially from the previous verses. We could paraphrase it this way:

Gen 15:6: Now remember, Abram had already believed in YHWH and YHWH counted him as righteous ...”

This brings up the second reason, that the salvation message of God throughout the Bible is always related to a sacrificial payment for sin, either through an animal sacrifice that pictures the future final sacrifice of Jesus on the cross or through faith in that final sacrifice. To explain this we must ask what Abram believed that resulted in his justification?

What had already been revealed about God’s plan of salvation for mankind?

The answer from just reading Genesis is, “Not much!” In fact, this verse, 15 chapters into our story is the first time we have the word for “believe,” for “counted,” and for “righteousness.” However, Heb 11:4-7 and other

passages tell us that Abel, Enoch, and Noah all had faith, though it is not mentioned in Genesis. People from Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Abraham including Melchizedek, were all saved the same way, by faith in God's promise of a future salvation as first indicated in Gen 3:15.

We need to remember that God does not always tell us everything in the order we think. Moses wrote Genesis to explain to the Israelites why God had chosen them and what His plan for them was. Remember they had just left Egypt and slavery and God was taking them to the land that He had promised Abraham. So Moses was instructed by God to write this explanation. In later books of the Bible we learn that from the time of Adam, everyone was told about faith, God's promise of salvation, and the importance of sacrifices. Let's review this.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they first realized they were naked, exposed, and vulnerable. They tried to solve this by using fig leaves as a loin cloth to cover themselves. They knew they had offended and sinned against the righteous God. So Yahweh lovingly and graciously approached them but they were afraid and hid. [N.B.: I'm using righteous instead of holy, in order to connect this to the idea of imputing righteousness later and declaring us righteous]

Gen. 3:8 ¶ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Gen. 3:9 ¶ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?"

Gen. 3:10 ¶ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

So Yahweh lovingly and graciously approached them. But they were afraid and tried to hide from the all-knowing God. God first explained to them what the consequences of their disobedience would be and then He explained a temporary solution.

The penalty for eating from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil was spiritual death, separation from God (Gen 2:17). They already experienced this in their realization of their nakedness and the fear of God. In the course of His explanation of the consequences God gave a promise that He would provide a solution. But not a lot was revealed at this time.

Gen. 3:15 **And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”**

This statement addressed the serpent, the seed of the serpent would be crushed by the “Seed of the Woman.” Following God’s explanation of these consequences, He then did something quite remarkable and significant.

Gen. 3:21 ¶ **Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.**

God always exercises the initiative through His continuous witness through Creation and through His knowledge of those who want to know more. God took the initiative to promise a future solution and to illustrate it in the tunics He made.

Though little is said here about what transpired, on the basis of later scripture we can read between the lines.

Much is left unsaid. The word for “tunics” indicates a full garment in contrast to the meager loin cloth of fig leaves. The word for “skin” when indicating animal hides is always used of the hide after skinning an animal.

Let us think about this. To have such a skin, an animal has to have died. This probably indicates that God taught them about sacrifice, since in the next chapter Abel is already knowledgeable about animal sacrifice. God would have taken the life of the animal.

Based on later revelation, we may assume that God taught them how to kill the animal, this would have been the first creature to physically die. This must have been quite a shock and sobering moment for Adam and Eve to watch this animal die because of their disobedience to God.

After death, God would have had to teach them about how to skin the animal. This would necessarily entail an anatomy lesson, as well as describing why the sacrifice was necessary.

An animal hide is not automatically useable. If not treated, the leather will quickly stiffen and harden so that it is no longer useable. God would clearly have taught them how to treat the hide so that it would remain supple. He would also have shown them how to make a needle and thread from the plants He had created to sew their new garments.

A lot took place! It might have even taken more than a day or two for the leather to be fully treated and to complete the task. This would give time for God to fully explain and teach about why He was doing this.

But like so much we have seen in Gen 1-11, God does not give us many details.

What we can legitimately conclude is that God taught them about sacrifice, the shedding of blood (which is an idiom for death), and the importance of these animal sacrifices. Hebrews 9:22b states a universal principle

Heb. 9:22b without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

~~God must be the One to initiate reconciliation. Man has no right to approach God. Similarly, Abraham was not looking for God. God approached him first.~~

In the next chapter, Gen 4, as you recall from our earlier lessons, Abel brought a sacrifice of the firstborn of the flock. Where did he get the information to do this? How did he know to bring an animal sacrifice? How did he know to bring the firstborn? Again we see that God must have already revealed these things to Adam and he taught Abel.

In Hebrews we are told that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith. So he was clearly trusting God's promise of a future salvation.

Heb. 11:4 ¶ It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

Here the writer of Hebrews tells us that God testified in this that Abel was declared righteous. **This provides us with another clue, that the act of sacrifice was an outward act which testified that the person had already believed God and that this sacrifice testified that they were righteous.**

God had given instructions to Adam and Eve regarding the sacrifice. By offering the sacrifice by faith as God instructed, Abel was declared righteous.

Conclusion: Abraham's faith was in response to God's gracious provision of a solution to the problem of a lack of righteousness, by justification

through faith in the promise of a future provision of a savior who would have victory over sin and Satan.

c. What does it mean that Abraham believed in YHWH?

The Hebrew word here is one we use all the time, the root word is *amen*, meaning to believe, to accept something as true. It is not a feeling or emotion, belief is a decision made with our minds, our intellects. It is not the quality of faith that justifies, but the object of faith. For Abraham that object of faith for justification must have been one that conforms to the rest of what Scripture teaches—a blood sacrifice in the Old Testament that pictured the future death of the promised savior on the cross.

It is Jesus’s future death on the cross that made it possible for God to declare Abram “righteous.”



d. What does it mean that the Lord “counted” him as righteous? (also address the issue of the NLT translation “because” of his faith)

The result of Abram trusting in YHWH is that God “counted” it to him as righteousness. This is a teaching throughout Scripture that often uses the word “impute” or “credit.” The word is often used in judicial contexts to describe the declaration or verdict of a judge.

It is extremely important to understand this. God did not make Abram righteous, God declared Abram to be righteous. God did not impart righteousness to Abram He imputed righteousness to Abram. The righteousness is God’s righteousness, not a righteousness within Abram.

Every human is born a sinner with an inability to measure up to God’s **standard of perfect righteousness.**

Is. 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

Is. 64:6 But we are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Because we lack righteousness, God must give us His righteousness

In order to be able to declare Adam, Noah, or Abram to be righteous, the legal penalty for sin had to be paid. Sinful people could not pay their own penalty which would be eternal separation from God.

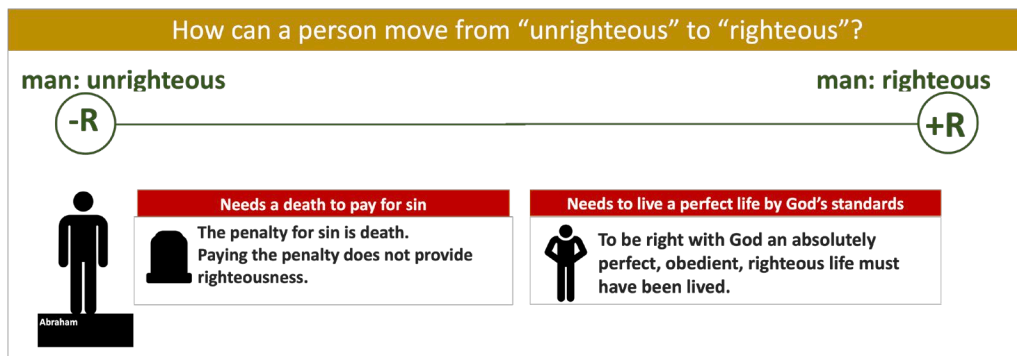
A. Jesus died in mankind's place, so that people do not need to die the eternal death. With no sin of His own, Jesus could die as a sufficient substitute in place of all mankind, fully satisfying sin's death penalty.

God provided a Savior who would pay that sin penalty. Our sins were paid for at the cross.

1Pet. 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

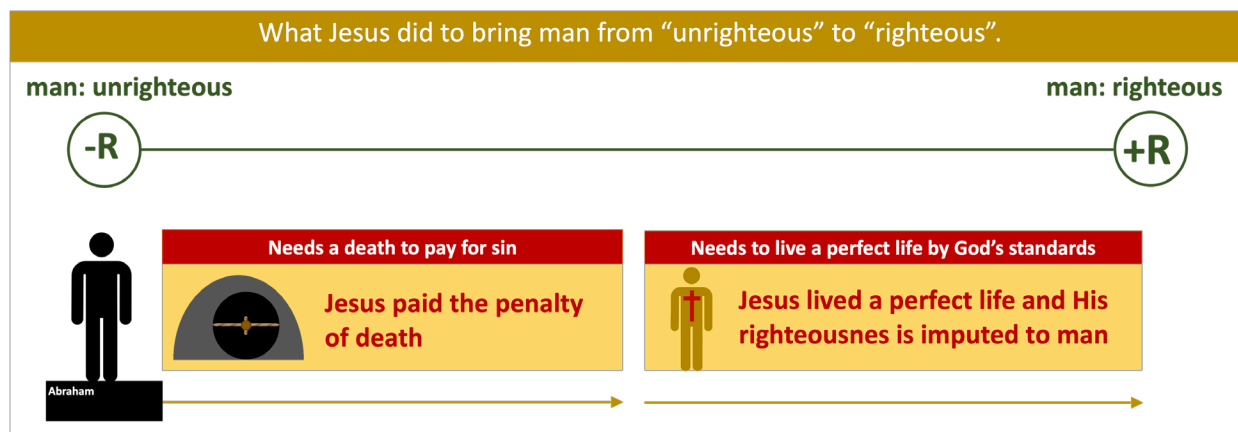
Col. 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

B. What Jesus did to bring man from a state of unrighteousness to a state of righteousness.



Jesus lived a perfect life and God imputed (or credited) His life to mankind's account. Jesus was the only One who could live a perfectly obedient life that would please God. Such a life was considered righteous by God.

However, though the sin penalty is paid, we are all still born with a lack of righteousness. So we must believe God's promise of salvation so that we will receive God's righteousness and be declared righteous. It is impossible for us to get ourselves righteous enough to be saved.



However, when Jesus came as the promised Saviour to rescue mankind from the sin problem, He performed two acts on Abraham’s (and all mankind’s) behalf. First, Jesus received the imputation of our sin to Himself, to pay the legal penalty for sin, to be separated judicially from the Father.

2Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Rom. 5:18 ¶ Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Rom. 5:19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.

Christ’s “one act” was the perfectly righteous life He lived as a man during His time on earth. He imputes or deposits or credits this perfect life into everyone who trusts God.

This was the way God planned to rescue man—it would be through Jesus!

But Abraham did not know any of these details. He didn’t even know the name of Jesus! So how could God make him righteous?

C. Abraham’s conscious choice to believe in the promise of God for a future solution through a Savior who would defeat sin and Satan resulted in God counting him to be righteous and declaring Him to be judicially righteous.

Abram made a conscious choice to believe. For years after this Abram lived faithfully and trusted in God.

And at some point God then approached Abram and gave him a command which included the promise of blessing.

Gen. 12:1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.

Gen. 12:2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

Gen. 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Gen. 12:4 ¶ So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

When Abraham chose to believe Yahweh, he must have believed this God was different from all the other “localised” and limited gods he was familiar with. He must have understood that Yahweh was not limited to being god over any particular area only.

Abraham’s act of leaving Ur showed he must have already believed that Yahweh was the sovereign God of the universe, over all other gods and over all locations. He must have trusted that He would be able to deliver on all His promises.

Abraham’s faith was a response to God’s ~~gracious invitation to a friendship.~~ Witness to Himself through the non-verbal witness of God’s creation and possibly through the personal witness of another believer in Yhwh’s salvation

~~It is important for us to know that God approached Abraham first. God must always be the One to approach man first.~~

2. Abraham, friend of God

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God.

How did Abraham suddenly become God’s friend? Did God just randomly decide to count Abraham as righteous because He liked Abraham better than others? Definitely not.

From our vantage point in history, we know that in Abraham's future, God provided Jesus as the promised Saviour. And it was Jesus who made it possible for Abraham to go from "unrighteous" to "righteous".

1. First, we must remember that before we are justified we are sinners and our lack of righteousness keeps us from God. But God initiated salvation for us. Our relative or negative righteousness is rejected and incompatible with God's perfect righteousness.

Rom. 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This was God's declaration of Abraham's legal righteousness through faith.

The apostle Paul made this very clear in Romans 4.

Rom. 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

Rom. 4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God.

Rom. 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*"

Rom. 4:4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

Here Paul is describing Abraham's justification before God which was necessary for eternal life.

Paul is careful to use the illustration from Gen 15:6 to show that Abraham's justification before God was not based on any ritual such as circumcision, which did not become a sign of the covenant until the events of Genesis 17. And did not become part of the Mosaic Law for around another 600 years. Six hundred

2. One of the consequences of Abraham's new possession of righteousness is that at the same time that he received the imputation of God's

righteousness, he also received peace with God. This also is described in the Bible with the word reconciliation.

Rom. 5:10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Rom. 5:11 And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

3. Abraham was declared righteous by God before God gave him the promises in the covenant. But still Abraham had to learn to trust God. Throughout the chapters from Genesis 12 to Genesis 22 God took Abraham through a number of tests to teach him to truly trust God to bring about the birth of the promised son.

During this time Abraham did not always do well.