

## *Faith & Righteousness*

*Genesis 15:1-6*

*“In the middle of this chapter occurs what is perhaps the most important verse in the entire Bible: Genesis 15:6. In it, the doctrine of justification by faith is set for the first time. This is the first verse in the Bible explicitly to speak of (1) ‘faith,’ (2) ‘righteousness,’ and (3) justification.’ We know that faith existed before Abram; for Abel, Enoch, Noah (Heb. 11:4-5,7), and the other godly patriarchs were saved by it. It was through faith on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ that God justified these Old Testament figures, as Paul says clearly in Romans 3:21-26. But up to this point in Genesis, we have not had this truth taught explicitly. Here the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and hence the theme of the entire Bible, is set before us... The doctrine of justification by faith is the most important of all Christian doctrines because it tells how one who is in rebellion against God may become right with him. It says that we may be justified, not by our own works-righteousness, but solely by the work of Christ received by faith.” Boice*

- I. We will never truly stand firm in righteousness until we understand, on a heartfelt level, who we are in Christ and what we’ve been given in Christ. He defines us, not the world. The world has no business defining who we are in Christ. If it does, then we fail to understand what our salvation means for us. Instead of standing firm, we will find ourselves individually and as a church lukewarm at best in our relationship with the Lord. One of the biggest factors that leads to a tepid faith is fear, be it the fear of man, fear of the unknown, or fear of not being in control. Abram was no different, therefore God assured him that He was his shield and his very great reward. He is our shield too. As David said in Psalm 118:6, *“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me.”* He is also our very great reward, for, *“as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).*

Gen. 15:1

Jn. 6:44

Rom. 8:29-30

2 Tim. 3:13

2 Sam. 22:2-3

**1 Cor. 16:13** *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.*

**Rev. 3:14-17** *To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*

- II. The Lord provided Abram with three foundational truths to keep him strong in the faith. Abram understood that God drew him, was faithful toward him, and would protect and reward him. Everything he was told by God Most High hinged on the Lord being true to His Word. The fulfillment of His promises to him, was both immediate and future. He was his shield and great reward the second the Lord drew him. But part of Abram's great reward was yet future, which meant he had to patiently wait for its fulfillment. It brought faith to a different level of trust. It meant that Abram had to learn to wait on the Lord without losing hope. God encouraged him through the assurance of His Word, which is what God knew he needed to hear to keep him standing firm in the faith. *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. (Rom. 15:4)*

Gen. 14:1

John 6:44

2 Timothy 2:13

**Heb. 11:1** *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

**Psalm 27:14** *Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!*

- III. Abram was declared to be righteous by or through faith. Faith became the channel through which righteousness was credited to him. The question is, how can a man or women get right with God? Abram became right with God by believing that He would be true to His Word. *"And without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6)*. As a result, righteousness was credited to him. In other words, he was made righteous. To be made righteous means that in God's court of law Abram was declared to be in right standing before him. It also means that his sins past, present and future would not be held against him based on the then future sacrifice of God's Son on the cross for the propitiation of his sins, propitiation meaning the appeasement of God's wrath against his sin. God has no desire to hold a man's sin against him, that is why He sent His Son to die on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. If we believe that He did that, i.e., the gospel, then we too will have our past, present, and future sins forgiven, He will also declare us righteous and in right standing before Him. *"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:22-24)*. That's God's way, the only way.

Gen 15:6

Isa 43:25

Rom 4:7-8

Rom 3:21-26,28

Rom 5:1

Gal 2:16

Gal 3:24

**dia pisteos** - "through" or "by" faith

*"In justification, God declares that he has accepted the sacrifice of Christ as the payment of our debt to the divine justice, and in place of sin has imputed Christ's righteousness to us." Boice*

*"Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight." Grudem*