

Lesson 68: Chapter 8: Paragraph 6: Jesus the Savior of the Elect in the OT

OUTLINE

2 wrong views
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INTRODUCTION

There are two key matters for us to consider regarding Christ as the Mediator before we leave this chapter. Paragraph 4 of chapter 8 has given a very rich detailing of what Christ has done for us. Paragraph 5 goes on to deal with the issue of who Christ did His work for, this raises the question of Limited Atonement which Thomas will deal with next week. And this raises the question, what about the elect of the OT, how were they saved, and so today we will be looking at paragraph 6 to answer this question.

‘Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, and today and for ever.’

Any sinner who has ever been saved has only ever been saved by grace through Christ. The mechanism of bringing a sinner to a saving faith in Christ is the ordinary means by which God has saved His people both in the OT and the NT. This glorious doctrine of gospel grace is something we glory in and take great assurance from. So today we want to think about two wrong ways in which salvation has been thought to be obtained in the OT, and then open up how Christ saved in the OT.

2 wrong views

Firstly, there is the old dispensational view that God saved people by works of the Law in the OT, but now in the NT by faith in Christ. Secondly, we will look at those who believe that there are OT examples of people who have no revelation regarding Christ, and are saved by their sincere faith prompted from what they are able to discern in general revelation. So the wrong views of those who believe that there are others ways of being saved, namely by works of the Law, or coming to be a worshipper of God apart from special revelation but through nature.

Dispensationalism, the teachings of J.N. Darby, as popularized by the Scofield reference Bible, divides human history into 7 periods of time. Innocency-Eden; Conscience-fall to flood; Human government-Noah to Babel; Promise-Abraham to Egypt; Law-Moses to John the Baptist; Grace-Church age; Kingdom-Millennium. Among the various things they taught about these varying dispensations was that God instituted salvation by works of the Law in the OT, and that was later replaced by justification by faith in the NT. This of course creates some real problems. Namely, that God's dealings with us are arbitrary and not necessary. In other words, if God decided right now that salvation depended on eating

chocolate covered cherries He could. That there are no criteria that need to be met in our being saved, and that there is nothing essential in Christ as our prophet, priest and king. That He is not just, our sins are not a problem, that the eternal torment of hell is His whimsical punishment for sins and not its necessary punishment, etc. If we happily say that God can change the way in which sins are punished and paid for, we are attacking, the character of God, the necessity of the atonement, Christ as the only sufficient mediator, hell as a fair punishment, etc. Dispensationalism further added to the problem by saying that in the Millennium when the Jews have their earthly Kingdom that the temple, priesthood, royal line, circumcision and the sacrifices will all be reinstituted, even after Christ has died for the sins of His people. This made Christ's sacrifice limited in its effectiveness. That it is all we need for the church age. That Christ's death is not the centerpiece of God's work in redemption but merely way of salvation in the dispensation of the Church age.

This form of teaching has been changed in the form of progressive dispensationalism, and so we see in the New Scofield Reference Bible that it now agrees with the 1689 that there is, and has only ever been one way of salvation in Christ. However, the old form of law salvation is still alive and well in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, and still in need of refutation amongst them.

The other erroneous view that sees salvation apart from Christ comes from the Inclusivist camp. Remember on the issue of salvation you have various views. Those who believe that all people's faiths are legitimate and all gods equal are called Pluralists; those who believe that everyone will finally be saved because of Christ whether they believe or not are called Universalists; those who believe that all sincere worshippers in other faiths, and those who have never heard yet are seeking in some way are saved by an inferred faith in Christ, and all Christian denominations and cults, are Inclusivists; and then there are the Exclusivists that say only those who put their faith in Christ, as taught in the Scriptures are saved. The 1689 is an exclusivist document which believes that all those who are saved (barring the question of infants and mentally retarded) are saved by Christ, both in the NT and the OT.

There are various aspects to this view, we will only deal with one here. The claim is made that there are many in the world today, who have not heard the Gospel, and are what they call 'informationally B.C.'. The assumption is that those who have never heard are just like Melchizedek, Noah, Job, Jethro, and Abraham, and that they can be saved apart from hearing the Gospel of Christ, but can reach God through a sincere seeking through the general revelation of nature and their consciences. Our response to this could take us several hours, but we will respond to it very briefly. Firstly, the Bible tells us very clearly that there is no one who seeks God through creation (Rom 3:11). We must not think that the world is full of good people in earnest to hear the truth, but rather we should view the world as Paul does in Rom 1:18-32 where God's reality, power, wisdom and goodness are revealed in creation, but the world because of their depravity have pursued idols. Man in sin is dead to God and is incapable of seeking for God (1 Cor 2:14-15, Rom 8:7). When God saves us, it is not because we were looking for Him first, but that He was looking for us. Any interest and thought we may have had that drew us to God and played a part in our salvation was the work of God's Spirit in us drawing us to Himself (John 6:44). Secondly, when we look at the examples of Job, Noah and Melchizedek, we see in all of them a knowledge of God already. These are not some sort of 'pagans' but those who either by oral tradition or some other means had a true knowledge of

God. The information they had was a true one. Let us turn for a positive exposition of Abraham's faith for the rest of our answer to this question.

What the Bible teaches

Turn to Romans 4. Firstly, let's put these verses in context. The broadest context is that it is in the New Testament, then in Paul's letters, then particularly in His most theologically saturated work on the Gospel, the letter to the Romans. In the first three chapters He has been developing the problem of man's sin, and God's provision for the problem in Jesus Christ. He has just finished a very closely argued section on why everyone needs to be justified, by a free gift of righteousness, found in Christ, not by Law, and therefore no one can boast, and that this is for both Jews and Gentiles (3:21-31). Having stated the truth of the Gospel, he now goes on anticipating some remonstrance and arguments from the Jews. Paul has just leveled the playing fields telling the Jews that their OT religion gives them no grounds for justification and that they need Christ as much as the Gentile. He anticipates the argument of circumcision from the Jews, the argument that would have insisted that at least circumcision was essential to salvation. Paul in response appeals to Abraham who was justified by faith before he was circumcised, and by this argument addresses directly our concern regarding OT salvation, and exactly how it happened.

Romans 4:1 (ESV) 'What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?' Imagine for a moment that you are a Jewish listener to Paul. He has just told you that you need to be justified by faith in Christ, and are not saved by law-keeping, namely circumcision. If you are able to keep your temper, for even the implication of the next thought would likely be enough to make Jews pick up stones, you would ask, but what about Abraham? He is the Father of the Jews, how was he saved?

Romans 4:2 (ESV) 'For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.' Continuing with the contrast between works and faith, grace and boasting, Paul implies that Abraham was not saved by works, and did not have anything to boast about. This of course would have been a new thought as many Jews of the time believed in the merit of the Fathers whereby God would be good to Israel when they prayed to God and appealing to His kindness in the name of the Fathers, because the Fathers had been so righteous that God could be good to us on their account. Yes, a very similar notion to the Roman Catholic notion of merit!

Romans 4:3 (ESV) 'For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Paul hides behind the word of God for the authority of his view quoting Genesis 15:6. He latches especially onto the idea that Abraham is credited/reckoned/counted righteous because on account of faith and not by works. It does not say that Abraham obeyed God, or Abraham was circumcised, or Abraham made sacrifices, but that he believed and was counted as righteous.

Romans 4:4-5 (ESV) 'Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. [5] And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,' Paul maps out the implications between faith and works, wages and gift. One is not given a gift when they receive their wages, they are receiving their due because they have worked for it. However, in contrast to that Paul tells us that 'trust' is the

opposite of 'work', and justification, the declaration is then something that happens to 'the ungodly' not the righteous.

Now we must be very clear here that Paul is not substituting the works of the law/circumcision for a simpler, easier work, the work of faith when he says, 'his faith is counted as righteousness.' We must not isolate that phrase from the context where he stresses in Romans 3:24 (ESV) 'and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,'. 'Gift', 'grace', 'freely', 'through Christ,' this is the emphasis. Paul is not contrasting me justifying myself by works of law, with me justifying myself by my work of faith; but me justifying myself by anything and being able to boast, and God justifying me by receiving what I cannot provide for myself and He gets the glory.

It is not enough for Paul to merely sight one example of this teaching from the OT he brings in a confirming text by David from Ps 32, Romans 4:6-8 (ESV) 'just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: [7] "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; [8] blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." David reflecting on the forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba, speaks about the happiness of being dealt with according to grace not law, that he did not receive his wages, but grace in God's dealings with him.

Paul anticipates the Jews saying, 'Yes but this blessing of full forgiveness only happens to those who are circumcised.' He anticipates a 'faith-and' response, so he writes, Romans 4:9 (ESV) 'Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.' He puts it forward as a question setting them up for the answer. Romans 4:10 (ESV) 'How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.' At this point the answer is really obvious.

Romans 4:11-12 (ESV) "He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised...." Here we see him drawing the conclusion for them, Abraham was not saved by works but by faith, not by his goodness, but God counting an alien righteousness as his. Paul maps out more of the significance of this. "The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, [12] and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." Here is the conclusion which brings us back to our question regarding salvation in the OT. Here Paul tells us that whether you are before Abraham, or after, under the Law or not under the Law, there has only ever been one way of salvation. We are justified by faith.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it like this in a letter to someone asking him the question about OT salvation, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones To Mr R. C. Sellers, 24 May 1962. "With regard to your question, the answer is this. It is made clear in Romans 3:25, 26 that God's forgiving and passing over the sins of people in the Old Testament was in the light of our Lord's death (Romans 3:25-26 (ESV) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.) Then

there is a parallel statement of this in Hebrews 9:5-15, and especially verse 15 (Hebrews 9:15 (ESV) Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.) You have the same point, of course, in verses 39 and 40 of Hebrews 11. Then there is the crucial statement in John 8:56: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.' When you take that in connection with Romans 4:17-24 and Galatians 3:6-29, it is clear that there is only one way of salvation, and that it is always in and through Christ and His work. Acceptance of and submission to the sacrificial teaching under the old dispensation was an acceptance of God's way of salvation. They realized that these were but types of something that was to come. The fact that their understanding and apprehension were incomplete makes no difference. God announced from the very beginning that there was but this one way of salvation. That is why everything in the Old Testament points forward to this."

Calvin put it like this, 'Accordingly, apart from the Mediator, God never showed favor toward the ancient people, nor ever gave hope of grace to them. I pass over the sacrifice of the law, which plainly and openly taught believers to seek salvation nowhere else than in the atonement that Christ alone carries out. I am only saying that the blessed and happy state of the Church always had its foundation in the person of Christ.' (Institutes 2:6:2).

How exactly was Christ presented? It would have been in types, shadows, prophecies and promises. The sacrifices pointed to Christ, the institutions of Israel, namely the prophets, priests, kings, the tabernacle, and the various federal heads all pointed to Christ; the prophets we are told in 1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV) "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." We need to stress that in the OT it was the Spirit who gave faith, and opened blind eyes, who illuminated the OT saints, just as in the new. If you look at the thief on the cross, and wonder how a dying man could look at the man dying next to him and believe in Him as the Messiah, and wonder how it is possible. It is because the Spirit revealed Christ to him. When all Israel had been viewing the ministry of Christ, yet still they were not sure, but Peter proclaimed Him the Son of God, Matthew 16:17 (ESV) 'And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.' After pronouncing woes on the unbelieving cities of Chorazin, Tyre, Sidon, and Capernaum, Christ prays, Matthew 11:25 (ESV) "At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;"

And we could go on! However, we need to conclude. The OT person was saved by the Holy Spirit teaching them to look to Christ in the sacrifices, promises, prophecies, institutions, law and oral tradition of the OT. Christ was the object of faith, although not revealed. They put their faith in the Christ to come, we put our faith in the Christ who has come. He is the lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth (Rev 13:8). And anyone who has ever been saved has

been saved through Christ. There will be no law choruses in heaven, no Moses or Abraham, or self worship going on in heaven, Christ will receive all the praise for what He has done to redeem a people for Himself.