



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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MEDITATION

For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

—Exodus 23:23-33

Until Thou Inherit the Land

From the peak of Mount Sinai, God revealed the pinnacle of his purpose for the people of Israel: that they inherit the land that God had prepared for them. God's purpose with Israel included many stations along the way: Egypt, the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, the wilderness, and the Jordan. But their ultimate destination was the blessed land of Canaan.

From Israel's point of view, inheriting the land of Canaan was impossible. The enemies were too many and too mighty for weak little Israel. The land was too large and expansive for puny little Israel. And Israel was too prone to adopt the gods and to imitate the works of Jehovah's foes. How could such a people as Israel inherit such a land as Canaan?

How, indeed! Such is always the question for God's church in this world. For Israel of old was the church, and Canaan was heaven. In the Old Testament language of types and shadows, God revealed for our sakes his ultimate purpose with

regard to Israel. There are many stations for God's people along this deep way of sin and grace, but the ultimate destination is the blessed land of heaven. But how shall such a people as Christ's church inherit such a land as heaven? God's people are so weak, so few, so sinful!

How? Why, by the sovereign work of God through Jesus Christ! Of course God's people are weak and small and sinful. But God is almighty and great and pure. Possession of the land never depended upon Israel's arm but upon God's. Inheriting heaven never depended upon the church's faithfulness but upon God's. God's might and truth were revealed in all their fullness at the cross, for there God sent his servant—his only begotten Son—to secure our inheritance by his death in our place. And on Mount Sinai God rehearsed for Israel what that work meant for their inheritance. God had determined Israel's inheritance, and he would save them to the uttermost.

From the peak of Mount Sinai, God revealed what he would graciously do and what he would graciously give to his people Israel: victory; worship; health; abundance; dominion; safety; covenant fellowship with God alone; and the whole promised land, from sea to sea. What a

blessed promise for those who must soon face the wilderness! What a blessed destination for those who had no other abiding place! What a gracious God, who comforts his helpless, sinful people with the gospel of what he does for us in Christ “until thou...inherit the land.”

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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(p. 326)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXVIII: The New King and His Kingdom: Abraham, the Friend of God (continued)

“And he believed in Jehovah and He reckoned it to him for righteousness.” —Gen. 15:6

We came, then, to the conclusion that Abraham possessed the faith, the same saving faith which also the saints of the new dispensation possess, and that this faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness. The fact that he was saved in no other way than we are is, in the light of Scripture, established.

It will not do to present the faith of Abraham as a sort of general faith, different from the saving faith of New Testament believers. Scripture does not support the idea that by this faith Abraham believed in God in a very general sense of the word, and that this faith was regarded by God as a sort of virtue of righteousness. On the contrary Rom. 4 gives us to understand very definitely that the faith of Abraham and the faith of the believers of the new dispensation are one and the same. Even to such an extent is this true that believers of the new dispensation are called the children of Abraham.

Neither is it correct to explain the faith of Abraham as a source or principle of good works, works of righteousness in him, so that God, foreseeing that Abraham would perform these works of faith, declared him righteous on that

basis of works. For again, Rom. 4 plainly testifies that the righteousness of faith and that of works constitute such a contrast that the one excludes the other. He that is righteous by faith leaves all works, whether of the law or of faith, behind as a basis for his righteousness. The basis for the righteousness of faith, the ground for God's imputation of righteousness by faith, lies outside of faith itself.

It is not even true that it is here a question of coming to the consciousness that we are righteous before God. In itself it is, of course, perfectly true, that by faith we also come to the consciousness that we are righteous before God. The act of faith is the acceptance, the conscious acceptance and appropriation of the God of our salvation in Christ and of the righteousness there is in him. And, surely, only by faith are we righteous in our own consciousness before God and have peace with him. But this is not the question here. The text in Gen. 15 does not speak of what Abraham does by faith, but of what God does. It does not say that Abraham believed God and that by this faith he knew himself righteous before God, but very definitely that God reckoned it unto him for righteousness. In short, Abraham possessed the very same

saving faith as also the believers of the new dispensation, and by that same faith he was accounted righteous before God.

Now, how must this be explained? How, in the first place, must it be conceived that a man is righteous by faith before God in general? And in the second place, how can it be maintained, not simply that Abraham actually possessed this righteousness by faith, but consciously believed in the God of grace and salvation in Christ Jesus?

The first question is readily answered. There is but one righteousness that is valid before God. It is the righteousness of Christ Jesus. He is the Righteous One. He took our guilt and our transgression upon himself and with it traveled the road of deepest shame and humiliation, thus bearing the wrath of God against sin and so battling with it that he swept our guilt and sin away and established a relation of perfect righteousness. There is, therefore, righteousness in him alone. And this righteousness he gained not for himself personally. No, according to God's eternal counsel he was the Head of all his people. We are chosen in him. In his eternal counsel God established a relation of unity between Christ and his people in such a way that he was responsible for them. What he did was imputed to them. This is the truth in the supralapsarian conception of justification from eternity. In eternity the union between Christ and his people was established by God's firm decree and in that sense God's people were righteous before him from eternity. Because of this union Christ enters into their state, assumes their guilt, suffers for their transgression, obeys to the full in their stead. But in time this union between Christ and his people that was established by God's eternal counsel is realized by the power of faith. By faith they are ingrafted into Christ. From eternity they are in Christ because of God's own decree. But historically this union is realized when the elect are ingrafted into Christ by the Spirit through faith. A man that does not possess the faith is historically outside of Christ, and for that reason and in that sense unrighteous. This fact, it seems to me, has often

been overlooked by those who emphasized justification from eternity exclusively. The relation between faith and righteousness was often presented as if the righteousness by faith was purely subjective, a coming to consciousness that we are righteous before God. And once more it may be said that it is perfectly true that we become conscious of our righteousness before God by faith only. But this is not all the truth. The text quoted plainly states how God reckons, not how Abraham reckons. And, therefore, it must be maintained that faith is the tie that binds us to Christ Jesus, that makes us, also before God, one with him and his righteousness. It is the realization of the union between Christ and his people as established in God's counsel. And this union, or rather on the basis of this union alone, God reckons a man righteous before him. Where all other righteousness is wanting, where there is no righteousness of the law and of works, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to him that believes, because by that faith he is one with Jesus.

But the question remains: How must this faith be explained in Abraham?

Historically nothing was realized. The fullness of time had not yet come. Christ had not come in the flesh. He had not suffered and died. The atonement had not been historically accomplished. His blood had not yet been shed for the sins of his people. How could Abraham be righteous before God at a time that the righteousness of Christ was not historically a fact?

Or, if this question is rather easily explained because of God's eternal decree in which all was established from before the foundation of the world, the other problem still remains: How could Abraham have this faith in the God of his salvation and consciously rejoice in his righteousness before God? That he did so is plain from the text, especially in the light of Rom. IV. Abraham consciously believed in Jehovah. He was consciously righteous.

How was this possible?

Did Abraham know Christ?

Did he, perhaps, expect more than just Isaac as the One that was to come? Did he, by faith, behold his seed in a different light than the mere earthly? Did his faith for that same reason extend beyond a child? Did his faith extend beyond Canaan, the earthly country, to the city that hath foundations, to the better, the heavenly country?

These are questions that are significant not only because they pertain to the salvation of Abraham, but because they stand intimately related to the salvation of all the saints of the old dispensation. How were the saints of the Old Testament saved, consciously righteous before God in the time of types and shadows?

This question we hope to look into next week.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.



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