

The Relationship Between Faith and Obedience (part two of a seven-part study)

A comprehensive survey of the Bible reveals a significant truth in regard to the connection between faith and obedience: it is constant and continuous. There is no covenant, no dispensation, throughout redemptive history, where the two become isolated from one another. In other words, they are inextricably linked and should not be viewed as mutually exclusive categories. The author of Hebrews confirms this for us in using the example of Abraham in Hebrews 11:8 –

By *faith* Abraham, when he was called, *obeyed* by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

God’s relationship with Abraham is then formally initiated by means of a covenant which God establishes with him. Immediately prior to its ratification in Genesis 15, God promises him descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. Abraham believes God, and God reckons it to him as righteousness. By means of that interaction, we have the first clear cut pronouncement of the doctrine of justification by faith, recorded for us in the Word of God (Genesis 15:1-6). Then the covenant is initiated and ratified by God alone; establishing it as an unconditional promise covenant, entered into on the basis of faith alone (Genesis 15:9-21; Hebrews 6:13-18). As we will discover in our next study, Abraham’s walk of faith would also require an extremely high level of obedience.

The significance of this covenant relationship between God and Abraham should not be underestimated. It becomes the foundational basis for experiencing God’s plan of salvation by means of faith, and not works. The apostle Paul makes this clear in writing to the church at Rome, a fellowship consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, where we read the following in Romans 4:13-16 –

“For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all . . .”

It sounds as if Paul is indicating to the Gentile Christians in Rome that they too are participants in the covenant God made with Abraham centuries earlier. That is precisely the case. We will explain how that is possible in our next segment.