

82. The Gospel of John—8:39-43

“The Light of the World” Pt.9

(8/11/19)

This morning we continue our study in John 8 where Jesus is in a major confrontation with the Pharisees over His claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God and the Light of the world—who came into this world (a world of darkness) to light the way for fallen humanity back to God.

As we said last week—at this point ‘the gloves have come off’ and things have escalated and have reached a ‘flash point’.

John 8:37-40 (NKJV)

³⁷ "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." ³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

⁴⁰ But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

Abraham is called “*the friend of God*” in the Bible (James 2:23) because—he heard the words of God when God spoke to him, he believed what God told him, and he obeyed what God told him to do.

Unlike the Pharisees who claimed to be Abraham’s children but rejected the word of God spoken to them thru Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus said to His disciples the night before His crucifixion that only those who obey what He had spoken are truly His ‘friends’.

And what makes the story of Abraham (initially ‘Abram’) even more powerful when it came to his obedience, is to realize that—when God first spoke to him, he was an idol worshipping gentile living in the Ur of the Chaldees (modern Iraq).

One author put it well—

“About one quarter of the book of Genesis is devoted to the story of Abraham. Although Abraham was born and raised a pagan idolater, when God’s word came to him he obeyed it. He turned his back on his old way of life and became a pilgrim and stranger on earth—and a citizen of heaven. He learned to trust and obey. His spiritual pilgrimage began with a great demand on his faith, that he give up his father, and it climaxed with an even greater demand on his faith, that he give up his son. Abraham staked everything on the dependability of God and the reliability of his word. “My word has no place in you,” Jesus said, in effect, to the Jews. “So do not boast that you are Abraham’s heirs. Abraham is not your father.” No, indeed—their father, the one whose works they were doing, was certainly not Abraham.”

The Pharisees pointed to and trusted in their pedigree (they were descendants of Abraham) and their piety (kept the law down to the smallest detail) as proof they were children of God and heaven bound.

But here, Jesus is telling them that a person can be born a Jew (a physical descendant of Abraham) and yet not really be a child of Abraham—what!?

Romans 2:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter [of the law]; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

Romans 9:6, 27 (NKJV)

⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel...²⁷ Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: *“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.*

Galatians 3:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ just as Abraham *“believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

I want you to notice carefully what Paul said in Galatians 3 about Abraham’s faith—that he didn’t just believe *in God*, he believed God.

In other words, he believed something God had *promised* him way back in Genesis 12 and later reaffirmed in Genesis 13, 15, 17, 22—

Genesis 12:1-3 (NKJV)

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. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 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."

Abraham was a wealthy man but what he wanted more than anything else was a son, an heir.

God had promised him a son and told him that through that son a whole nation of children would be born from him—even though at the time God made this promise to him, he didn't have any children, in fact his wife (Sarah) had been barren for many years.

And yet God strengthened that promise by having him go outside and look up into the night sky and said to him—

Genesis 15:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ ..."Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶ And he believed...and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

The Hebrew word translated **believed** means "*to say amen*"—God gave a promise to Abraham and he responded with "*Amen (truly)!*"

In other words, he believed with all his heart what God had promised him and it was *this* faith that was counted for righteousness.

This is the first time the word "**believe**" is used in the Bible.

But what exactly did Abraham believe that allowed God to declare him righteous?

Genesis 15:5-6 (KJV)

⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy **seed** be. ⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:17-22 (NKJV)

...¹⁷ (as it is written, "*I have made you a father of many nations*") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸ who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "*So shall your descendants be.*" ¹⁹ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²² And therefore "*it was accounted to him for righteousness.*"

Abraham believed that God could ‘raise the dead’—in other words, bring life out the ‘deadness’ of his body and Sarah’s womb by giving them a son and through this son—he would have so many descendants (Abraham means ‘father of a multitude’) so that all the nations of the earth would eventually be blessed.

Now of course most of the orthodox Jews in Paul’s day (and today) assume that the son God is talking about is Isaac.

But Paul is going to make the argument that this promise that God gave to Abraham is much larger than Isaac or his physical descendants—the Jewish people.

Galatians 3:7-9 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."* ⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Now of course the statement in v.8, "*In you all the nations [of the earth] shall be blessed*" is a quote from the original promise that God gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3—

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Now if this is talking about the nation of Israel and the Jewish people specifically and exclusively, that in them all the families of the earth would be blessed—it's hard to imagine how such a hated people like the Jews could be a blessing to the people of this world.

The answer is found in the truth that God is really not talking exclusively of Isaac or the nation of Israel—He is really talking about the Jewish Messiah Jesus and how He would make salvation available to all the families of the earth—not just the physical descendants of Abraham.

And that this Messiah (Jesus Christ) would someday bring a Kingdom of righteousness to the earth made up of people from every nation and family in the world!

We see this prophetically promised by God to Abraham—

Genesis 15:5 (KJV)

⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy **seed** be.
(NKJV—"descendants"—Explain)

Genesis 22:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your **seed** all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Galatians 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his **Seed** were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many (i.e. the Jewish people), but as of one, "And to your **Seed**," who is Christ.

And so, Paul is telling us that the promise God gave to Abraham that through his son Isaac (the son of promise), God would give him so many descendants that they would be innumerable—that promise wasn't really about physical descendants of Abraham (Jews) but it spoke of spiritual children—those who would be born into the family of God by believing in Jesus Christ.

In that regard Isaac was a *partial* fulfillment of that promise because he was in the Messianic line that Jesus would descend from but from the beginning Jesus was the *ultimate* fulfillment of that promise—that in Him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Galatians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

But getting back to Paul's argument that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works—

Romans 4:3 (NKJV)

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

The word *accounted* in Romans 4:3 and Gal.3:6 is the Greek word 'logizomai.'

This same word is used eleven times in Romans 4—it is translated "*counted*" in verse 4.

It is translated "*accounted*" in verses 9–10, 22 and "*imputed*" in verses 6, 8, 11, 23 and 24).

It is a banking term that means "*to put to one's account.*"

Now this becomes the crux of Paul's argument not to mention the foundational doctrine upon which the gospel and therefore our salvation is built—that the righteousness that saves us comes from God and is imputed to us thru our faith and not earned by us for our works.

Romans 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace [a gift] but as debt.

When a man works, he earns a wage, his employer owes that man a debt. The employer doesn't hand him his check at the end of the week saying, "*Here's a gift.*"

But if the man couldn't work for some reason and his boss went to his house and handed him a check without him working for it—then it would be a gift.

Abraham did not work for his salvation—he simply trusted (believed) God’s Word.

It was Jesus Christ who did the work on the cross, and His righteousness was put to Abraham’s account because of Abraham’s faith.

Romans 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

John 8:39-41 (NKJV)

³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹ **You do the deeds of your father."** Then they said to Him, "**We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God."**

So here it is, these Pharisees, furious that Jesus kept saying they weren’t the children of Abraham, now make a vicious accusation against Him.

They verbalize an accusation that had been hanging over Jesus’ head since He was born—that His birth was the result of sexual immorality on the part of His mother (the word translated ‘fornication’ is the word we get the word ‘porn’ from and means sexual immorality of any kind).

Ever since Mary had claimed that Jesus was virgin born—most people believed she really had an affair on Joseph with another man and then claimed she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had been claiming His Father was God the Father throughout His entire ministry, and now when these Pharisees claimed that God was *their* Father and that Jesus was born of sexual immorality.

When the Pharisees said, “**We have one Father: God.**” No doubt they had in mind such Old Testament passages as:

Exodus 4:22 (NLT2)

²² Then you will tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son.

Jeremiah 31:9 (NLT2)

⁹ ...For I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my oldest child.

One pastor said,

“It was true that God was the Father of all Israel in a national sense. But, spiritually speaking, He was the Father only of those who had truly come to saving faith.”

John 8:42 (NKJV)

⁴² **Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.**

That same author I just quoted went on to say—

*“Those who profess love for God yet reject the One who **proceeded forth and came from Him** cannot be true children of God. By refusing to embrace Jesus, the Jewish leaders completely undermined their claim that God was their Father. As Jesus had said to them earlier, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (5:23); later He would warn them, “He who hates Me hates My Father also” (15:23). True children of God are inherently characterized by a love for His Son.”*

John 8:43 (NKJV)

⁴³ **Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.**

Earlier in Jesus’ ministry, as the scribes and Pharisees kept hearing Him preach the gospel and seeing Him perform miracles, we read in John 12:37—

John 12:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,

The Scribes and Pharisees repeatedly rejected Jesus’ ministry when He proclaimed Himself to be Messiah and Savior—and with each rejection, their hearts grew harder and harder until they passed “*the spiritual point of no return*”.

At that point it was no longer a matter of they “*wouldn’t believe*”—now they “*couldn’t believe!*”—

John 12:37, 39 (NKJV)

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him... ³⁹

Therefore they could not believe...

God can do nothing for those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior in the face of all the overwhelming evidence and the witness of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts.

John 10:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

“He who hears My word” (v.24)—the **“word”** that Jesus is referring to is the gospel.

To **“hear”** the gospel of Jesus doesn’t just mean to hear with your ears—it also means to believe with your heart!

There are many people that have *heard* the gospel preached many times but have never done anything about it.

Apparently, they didn’t think it important enough to give it any consideration and so they ‘heard’ but didn’t *‘listen’* if you will—in other words, they didn’t believe it by receiving it into their hearts.

On several different occasions after making a critical point with regard to salvation Jesus said, *“He who has ears to hear let him hear.”*

This was His way of saying, *“For those of you that have open hearts, don’t let what I have just said go in one ear and out the other—listen with your heart not just your ears and do something about what I am saying.”*

And just what did Jesus want them (and all people) to do with His gospel presentation? —He wanted them to believe!

Jesus Christ is the true Light Who was sent by the Father to give the light of God's truth to every person living in this spiritually dark world (John 1:9).

But there comes a point in the life of every unbeliever, who continually rejects the light of God's truth, where God eventually "turns out the lights"—and the Holy Spirit stops speaking to their hearts about salvation.

That's why the Bible says: "*Today is the day of salvation...if God is speaking to you right now don't harden your heart any longer—this might be the last chance you will ever get*".

At that point the opportunity for salvation has been officially withdrawn, they have passed the spiritually point of no return and have committed, what Jesus referred to as, "*Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*"—the 'day of grace' has ended and their eternal destruction is sealed. (Judas—"and it was night")

Understand, when Jesus said these Pharisees were not able to listen to His word—it wasn't that He was trying to keep the truth from them, on the contrary.

God *was* speaking but they *weren't* listening—and the reason they weren't listening was because their pride and rebellion had made them 'deaf' to the voice of God.

Let me end by saying that God in His great love desires for all people to be saved and will do whatever He has to do to get a person's attention that they would repent and receive Jesus as their Savior—I believe He even does this with a nation—like ours.

We see God using storms like hurricanes on our east coast and wildfires and earthquakes on our west coast to get our attention.

We see anger and unrest in the streets as our nation has become deeply divided.

Mass shootings have become so routine that the news doesn't even bother to report many of them.

We see Him using the financial cliff we're about to go over (22 trillion in debt) to wake us up.

What does God have to do to finally get our attention—I shudder to think about it!

And yet, instead of repenting and getting our lives right with God—many in our country are voting for socialism (communism lite)!

This tells us that many in our country (the number is growing every day) are looking to government to take care of them instead of God.

Remember what Thomas Jefferson said, *“A government big enough to give you everything you want, is big enough to take away everything you have”*.

May God be merciful to the United States of America and give us revival instead of judgment!