

• *Genesis 15:6*

1. Salvation starts with the gift of a covering righteousness

• *The problem is that we are sinners*

2. God's protecting righteousness is 'reckoned' to us not produced by us

• *His righteousness – not ours*

3. Faith alone

4. Not the result of godliness

• *Faith saves – not obedience*

5. The Mosaic law was not involved

• *The law did not exist*

Genesis 15:6 is one of the great statements of the Bible. It is quoted by Paul ^{☞1} and by James ^{☞2}. It is the heart of a good relationship with God, and the starting point of every blessing of the life of faith.

1. **Salvation starts with being given a covering righteousness.** 'Abram believed Yahweh and that was reckoned to him for righteousness' ^{☞3}. This is the heart of the gospel. Our problem is that we are sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by routine. Nothing we can do can cancel out this sinful status, sinful habit, sinful character, sinful record. Amendment is not good enough; it cannot wipe out the past nor is our self-betterment ever totally successful. What we need is a covering. We need to be declared righteous before God even though in ourselves we are weak and wayward. This is precisely what we are given when we believe God's promise concerning salvation, concerning Jesus or (as Abram would have put it) concerning 'Abram's seed'. It was this that Paul made much of. He spoke of 'a *righteousness that is by faith*' ^{☞4}. Salvation starts when God gives us a gift of righteousness which is not at all ours but which comes wholly from God.

2. **God's protecting righteousness is 'reckoned' to us and is not produced by us.** It is very important to grasp this word 'reckoned'. A lot of people seem to have the idea that we save ourselves with the help of God's grace, but if we grasp hold of this word 'reckoned' we shall see that it is not our character either before we are saved or after we are saved, that enables us to stand before God. It is not **our** character or behaviour at all. It is God's righteousness, God's holy character being attributed to us long before He ever works any changes in us. And even after God does work some changes in our character it is not those changes that enable us to stand acceptable before God. We are always, always, always, able to stand before God only because of a righteousness which He 'reckons' as ours.

3. **It is faith alone that brings a covering righteousness.** 'Abram believed Yahweh and that' – his believing and nothing else – 'was reckoned to him for righteousness'.

4. **This being 'reckoned' righteous is not the result of godliness.** Actually there is every reason to believe that Abraham was a complete pagan when God first called him. Abraham's family worshipped other gods but God summoned Abraham out of the darkness of Mesopotamian paganism. Genesis contains no mention of any special obedience on Abraham's part that led to his being reckoned righteous. It does not say 'Abram **obeyed** Yahweh and that was reckoned to him for righteousness'; it says 'Abram **believed** Yahweh and that was reckoned to him for righteousness'. It was his faith that brought him a 'reckoned' righteousness; it was not his obedience that saved him.

5. **This being 'reckoned' righteous did not involve the Mosaic law.** Actually the Mosaic law did not exist! This is Paul's point in Galatians 3:15–18. The law came into Israel's history four centuries after Abram was 'declared righteous'. How could obedience to the Mosaic law be necessary if the Mosaic law did not exist when Abraham was 'justified'?

^{☞1} Romans 4:3,9,22; Galatians 3:6

^{☞2} James 2:23

^{☞3} 15:6

^{☞4} Romans 1:17

6. Circumcision was not involved

- No religious ceremony brings a covering of righteousness

6. This being 'reckoned' righteous did not involve circumcision of Israelite nationality. This is Paul's point in Romans 4:9-10. Abram was credited with righteousness before he was circumcised. Paul's argument in Romans 4:9-10 can be applied to other signs and ceremonies. Abram was justified without being circumcised. He was also justified without being baptized, without being confirmed, without the Lord's Supper, without going to 'Mass'. If any of these signs and ceremonies were necessary for salvation, Abram could not have been the model of salvation since he had none of them at the time he was justified. But Abraham is the model of salvation, the father of all believers. Our passage does not say 'Abram was circumcised and that was reckoned to him for righteousness'. It does not say 'Abram was baptized and that was reckoned to him for righteousness'. None of these things are involved in our justification. Abraham is the model! And only faith is mentioned as the channel by which God's righteousness is reckoned as being ours. Faith alone without work brings a covering righteousness. Faith alone without ceremony brings a covering righteousness. Faith alone without Jewish nationality brings a covering righteousness.

7. Faith is an assurance about God's word of promise?

- Taking God at His word links us to Jesus
- His righteousness is reckoned as ours

7. What then is faith? It is assurance about God's word of promise. It is not an assurance about oneself, but it is an assurance about God and His word. Abraham is quite unsure about himself but whenever God speaks he is sure that what God says is true and right, and he is able to build his whole future on the truth of what God has said.

We have 'faith' when we boldly believe in 'Abraham's seed', Jesus. We have 'faith' when we boldly take God at His word, believing that we are righteous before God although we are sinful in ourselves. We are righteous before God through a Person, through Abram's seed. Abram himself had a shadowy preview, but now we are able to spell it out in fullness and explicitly. The righteousness that is given to us is the righteousness of Jesus. As soon as we trust Abraham's seed, Jesus, we are given the covering righteousness of Jesus' holy obedience. God sees us as if we were as holy as Jesus! We are 'reckoned' to be as righteous as He is. It is true for us, the very second we take Jesus as our Saviour. When we believe in Jesus, our believing links us to Jesus and His righteousness is reckoned as ours.



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