

Revisiting "Sonship" Part 6

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The apostle, Paul, evidently experienced a great renewal of mind in respect to the message of the gospel as found in the history of God's dealings with the Hebrew patriarch, Abraham. It is by the story of that man, that the apostle is apprehended to see the place of election, promise and grace in the economy of God.

He is brought face to face, among other things---but in this case, quite disturbingly--- with the fact that his own, and his fellow Jew's obsession with the law of Moses---a necessary contrarian insert into the relationship of man with God---completely deviates from the straight-line thought of God that leads all mankind out from eternity, into, and through the ages, on to glory.

Certainly, other very noteworthy personages appear on the biblical scene before and after Abram (exalted father), who would become Abraham (Father of many). Who, among Bible students, has not found an element of example for spiritual living in Enoch, Noah, Joseph, Daniel, David and a host of others that stand out in the history of God's way with men?

Through each and every one of them, we have been afforded glimpses into the righteousness of God. But Abraham stands out among them as quite singular and unique in affording a clear and comprehensive frame of reference for Paul's, and our search to understand the nature of divine intrusion into the human condition.

Without the story of Abraham, the experiences of all of our other brethren leading up to the appearance of Christ, would only give us fragments, little bits and pieces of the puzzle, inadequate, in and of themselves, or taken together, to give a complete and cohesive picture of "Him, with Whom we have to do." Finally, of course, the story of Abraham must defer to the Logos, Himself, but only to Him as the One who explains and defines in Himself the nature of God's embrace of humanity.

While fully appreciating the wisdom in the generally accepted assertion that basing any doctrine on biblical silence is to do so on

very shaky ground, there is an unmistakably significant silence on God's part in respect to anything about Abe that would particularly qualify him as one by whom God might gain a foothold among men for a momentous advance toward fulfilling His aionian purpose. As the saying goes, "the silence is deafening."

This certainly must have contributed to Paul's understanding that God's choice of human instrumentality traces back to the womb before the man or woman in question could have done any good or evil that would qualify or disqualify them for heavenly service. He understood that in respect to Jacob and Esau, and was keenly aware of it in respect to his own calling as one in whom God would very uniquely reveal His grace.

One of the first things that is established in God's relationship with Abraham, is that Abraham brings nothing to the table. He is sovereignly chosen. Superiority of human character is irrelevant. It has no place in the matter. God chose him on no other basis than His sovereign will. There is a prevenient grace that kicks off a process of grace that leads to a consummation of grace. In a word, it's grace all the way.

Prevenient grace causes a person to come face to face with his own emptiness. The man or woman finds themselves no longer able to hide from the depths of their need. Palliatives no longer work. He or she realizes that they cannot escape the One Charles Spurgeon called, "The Hound of Heaven." His hounding lies deep within our own humanness, and suddenly it rises up demanding to be recognized. The writer of Hebrews says that Abraham looked for a city whose Architect and Builder is God.

The sovereign God within Abraham uncovered for him, and to him, his need to be part of a gathering, an ecclesia of humanity, which could satisfy the ache of his heart; for that community formed by the communion which constitutes the family of God, the family which God is. We know it now as the communion of the Holy Spirit, the communion in the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It has first the vertical dimension in that it can only come from above, but it must also be horizontal as the body edifies itself in love. Every

failure of religion is rooted in man's attempt to bring this about. Only God can do this by His sovereign election and will, and He always starts very small. He starts with one tiny elected injection-point into the whole of humanity in order to fulfill His larger election of all humanity as the family of God.

Who is ultimately that injection-point? Why, of course, it's Jesus Christ. He is to be understood as that elect One to whom all other election points. He is the Chosen One, the Son of God's love. Now, brethren, we're zeroing in on the meaning of election and sonship: The One, who is God's elect, includes all in Himself, thus, in Him all are elect. Paul wrote that we thus judge, that if One died for all, then all died. How could that be true, except that all were in him, so that His death was inclusive of their death.

Back to Abraham. God's sovereign choice of Abraham was for the purpose that in him, by way of his SEED, all the families of the earth would be blessed. Remember, Paul explained that the SEED--singular---of Abraham was to be understood as Christ. God's choice of Abraham points forward to God's choice of Christ, Who includes in Himself, the whole of humanity. As the first Adam included all in himself naturally, so the Last Adam included in Himself all spiritually.

We need a whole new mindset regarding election. Election, as classically pictured in Abraham, was not about Abraham alone, it was about God's election, in Christ, of all humanity by which He will fill all things (or the whole.) That's THE election. Read Ephesians. All of us were chosen in eternity to take on material form in the aions, so that out from our spirit-essence, which is Christ, we might fill all creation, including our own creaturehood with the glory of God which is the substance of our being in God.

There's a lot of lip service given to Christ-centeredness, when all the while a whole lot of very subtle ego-centeredness is going on, and THAT often in the name of election! I've been through the gamut of pretensions to election. First, as a Roman Catholic. You see, we were the true church, the original church, founded on God's choice, Peter. God brought me out of that into independent, Bible-believing fundamentalism, with its version of election. We were Bible believers, and Dr. Scofield's notes gave us an answer for every question.

Then there was Pentecostalism, with its evidence of election; speaking in tongues, followed by a brief stint in "holiness." The election-distinctive there was the "eradication of the carnal nature." I'll tell you, you're special when the very "root of sin" has been ripped out of you. I remember a mentor of mine who tested a man's profession of that experience. He kicked him in the shins, and the man lost all his sanctification in a moments time.

Next came "The Recovery of the Church," with its claim to be a special gathering of those who were faithfully "obedient to the heavenly vision." Then, the charismatic movement that saw itself as an elect bunch out of classical Pentecost and old-line denominations. That was a particular mix of the sublime and the ridiculous, I'll tell you.

Now, I find myself among brethren---and I say this with the greatest sincerity---who express more of the Spirit of Christ across the board than I have ever witnessed before in my walk with the Lord. Never have I witnessed, generally, such purity of heart regarding money (and that's significant, believe me). Never before have I been able to participate with a network of believers so open to the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Never before have I noticed such sincere desire not to build personal kingdoms. Yet, once again, I have to say that I can't help discerning a certain element of spiritual elitism that that has crept in among us which misunderstands the nature of election and is resistant to revisiting our "sonship"-distinctive.

Am I being unnecessarily critical? Well, you judge. I've always been one to recognize and acknowledge what God did through these movements and what He did in my own life, personally, through all of my truth-search forays. I've always encouraged others to recognize and acknowledge the same. But, brethren, I'm raising a standard against religious elitism and making no apologies for doing so. May the Lord be merciful and gracious to us and show us how truly inclusive is His heart.

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