

## *A Biblical Theological Quiz*

By Mark Skillin, M.Div., Th.M.

1. If Abraham was justified in Genesis 15:6, and justification is a once-for-all-time declaration, then can it be true that Abraham was justified in Genesis 12:4 when he first believed God (as reported in Hebrews 11:8)? If so, how can this be true if justification is a once-for-all time declaration and he was declared right with God later in Genesis 15:6? If not, then how could Abraham *not* have been justified when clearly he had faith in God in Genesis 12:4?

*Yes, Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 12:4. It can be true that Abraham could be declared right with God in Genesis 12:4 and then later in Genesis 15:6 because justification is not a once-for-all time declaration until the last day at the judgment seat of God. In fact, as James reports, Abraham was declared to be righteous again in Genesis 22 when he obeyed God in being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham's life exhibits the biblical fact that justification requires perseverance. Not only must we believe God in order to be justified, we must keep believing in order to continue be justified as God's children.*

2. If it is true, as it is commonly taught, that no one can keep the law blamelessly, then how can the Lord describe Abraham as one who “obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws” and Hezekiah as one who “held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the Lord had given Moses” and Josiah as one who “turned to the Lord...with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with the law of Moses” and Zechariah and Elizabeth as people who “were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly” (Gen.26:5; 2Ki 18:6; 2Ki 23:25; Lk 1:6)?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that the Law of Moses could not be kept blamelessly. This is plainly evidenced by the Old Covenant faithful named in the second question. The problem is that we equate "blameless" with being sinless. However, when someone is considered "blameless" or "upright" under the Old Covenant, they could be considered this because they were people who acknowledged and repented of sins committed. The covenant accounted for sin and made provision for it with confession and sin offerings, in fact, confession and sin offerings were commanded in the case of sin. So to keep covenant was to obey God in response to sins committed, and then you were considered "blameless" and "righteous." For more on this see Psalm 32.*

3. If it is true, as it is commonly taught, that Jesus Christ came in order to keep the law of Moses perfectly because we aren't able to, then why would Jesus Christ approve of his disciples breaking the Sabbath, when they could have waited one more day to pick grain in the fields (Mt 12:1-8)? Why would Jesus Christ appear as his own witness when the Law requires two or three to establish a matter (Jn 8:12-14)? Why would Jesus Christ change or add to the Passover meal which would have been forbidden in the Law (Lk 22:19)? Why would Jesus Christ submit to baptism “to fulfill all righteousness” when baptism is nowhere commanded in the Law of Moses (Mt 3:15)? Why would Jesus Christ grant forgiveness when in the Law of Moses forgiveness was to be found through temple observance (Lev 4:26; Mt 9:2)?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that Jesus Christ came in order to keep the Law of*

*Moses perfectly because we were not able to keep it. As we have seen from the second question, the Law was able to be kept perfectly. Jesus came in obedience to His Father, not necessarily to the Law of Moses. Jesus came in order to be sinless and qualify as a spotless sacrificial lamb, and in this way fulfill the sacrificial requirement of the Old Covenant. A crucial mistake we have made is to equate keeping the Law of Moses with fulfilling the Law of Moses. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, not by keeping every command given to Israel, but by performing the role that the Law had for Israel. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the sacrifice, temple, high priest, king, etc of the Law of Moses.*

4. If it is true, as is commonly taught, that justification is a once-for-all time declaration that begins the Christian life, then how can Jesus Christ teach that justification happens on the last day at the judgment seat of God in Matthew 12:37?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that justification is the once-for-all declaration that is limited to the inception of the Christian life. This is how Jesus Christ is able to teach that justification happens on the last day at the judgment seat of God in Matthew 12:37.*

5.If it is true, as it is commonly taught, that justification is by means of faith in Jesus' death on the cross alone, then how can Jesus Christ teach that justification is by means of a holy use of our mouths in Matthew 12:37?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that justification is by means of faith in Jesus Christ's sacrificial atonement alone. Though, it is biblically clear that we cannot be justified apart from faith in Jesus Christ's death for us, however, faith in Jesus' death alone will not save anyone. This is how Jesus Christ can teach that justification is also by means of a holy use of our mouths. James reflects this as well when he writes, "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight reign on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless"(1:26).*

6. If it is true, as it is commonly taught, that forgiveness is solely by faith that Jesus died for our sins, then how can Jesus Christ teach that we are forgiven by being willing to forgive others in Matthew 6:14,15?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that forgiveness is obtained solely by faith that Jesus died for our sins. Though, it is biblically clear that we won't be forgiven apart from faith that Jesus died for our sins, however, faith in Jesus' death alone will not forgive anyone. This is how Jesus can teach that we are forgiven by obeying God in forgiving others in Matthew 6:14,15.*

7. If it is true, as it is commonly taught, that forgiveness is only on the basis of faith in Christ's sacrificial atonement, then how can Jesus Christ instruct us to ask for forgiveness *on the basis* of our obedience in forgiving others in Luke 11:4?

*As stated above, it is not true, as it is commonly taught, that forgiveness is obtained only on the basis of faith in Christ's sacrificial atonement. Since this is true, Jesus Christ is able, without contradiction, to describe our forgiveness to be on the basis of our willingness to forgive others in Luke 11:4. To be sure, faith in Jesus' sacrificial atonement is a necessary basis of our forgiveness, but it is not the only basis. For instance, election, faith and obedience could each be understood to be a basis of forgiveness as well, since apart from God's electing grace, faith, and obedience the cross is ineffective for salvation.*

8. If it is true that the Gospel message consists in the fact that Jesus died for our sins, then how could the disciples preach the Gospel *before* they had any knowledge of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death for the sins of the world (Lk 9:56; Lk 18:31-34)?

*It is not true, as it is commonly taught, that the Gospel message consists in the fact that Jesus died for our sins. It is biblically clear that a central component of the Gospel message contains God's provision for our forgiveness, namely, Jesus' sacrificial death. However, it is also clear that the Gospel message is more expansive than just a message about God's mercy at the cross. The Gospel message is a message of the reality of God's reign through the kingship of Jesus Christ, and all that reign entails. Hence, the disciples were able to preach the Gospel before they understood Christ's sacrificial atonement, as Jesus himself said, "I must preach the good news (the Gospel) of the kingdom of God..." (Lk 4:43).*