

Romans Chapter 4

Review: Please circle the correct answers. In Romans chapter 3 we learned that:

1. Jews /Gentiles just need to tweak their religion a bit and they'll be okay. T or F
2. On judgment day, God puts our bad deeds and our good deeds into piles and whichever pile is biggest determines if we go to heaven or hell. T or F
3. Most people are basically good and decent so only a few really bad folks need to get saved. T or F

There are only two kinds of religion on earth. **1. Biblical Christianity**, which teaches the gospel, Romans 1:16, that the only way to God is by faith in the blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as our substitute, dying as us for us, appeasing the wrath of God against our sins and rising from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

2. Every other religion, because all other religions teach the same thing, that your good works or good intentions provide enough righteousness to make God accept you. Every religion on earth except biblical Christianity teaches works salvation or works righteousness. It is part of being human to imagine that you can work your way to heaven, that you can earn heaven.

Of course, the Bible never says that. Once you know that truth, you will know that the best way to witness to anyone from any religion is to tell the gospel story, of Jesus and His death for sinners, his burial for sinners and His resurrection from the dead for sinners according to the scriptures because the gospel *is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes*, Romans 1:16.

As you read Romans, please do not miss the loving heart of the apostle Paul. This missionary apostle to the Gentiles argues from his heart and with his heart. The pages of Romans are bedewed with his tears. Saul the chief of sinners responded to the loving heart of his Savior, Acts 9, converted from Judaism to Jesus and became Paul the apostle. From his fervent missionary heart, the love of God was and is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. As you read and study Romans, ask the Holy Spirit for understanding. There is much more than logic, and much more than reason in Paul's writing. There is caring and compassion and concern. There is exuberance and joy at what God has done and will do for everyone who gets saved.

4:1 - What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? - Paul opens with a question and links what he is about to say to his previous argument. In chapters 1, 2 and 3, Paul has demonstrated that Gentiles and Jews and the entire human race are sinners in need of a Savior. In 3:25, Paul introduces the great foundational truth of justification by faith and explains how God accomplished His plan of salvation. Now Paul explains why salvation can only be by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone with no human works involved.

To support his argument, Paul reads into evidence the testimony of Jesus and calls Father Abraham, Luke 16:24, Matthew 3:9, Joshua 24:3, John 8:56 and King David to testify. Abraham's testimony is primary. David's testimony is secondary and simply supports Abraham's testimony. All of chapter four is focused on the great gospel truth that God is an exclusivist Who will not accept your good works, your religious views, my religious views, any one else's religious views or anyone's religious good works or any other way to heaven than Jesus.

Abraham our father - *Our* indicates Paul is addressing both Jews and Gentiles. Historically, only Jews viewed Abraham as their father. Not until Paul writes Romans does it become clear in the Bible that the meaning of Abraham as our father includes Gentiles. Genesis 17:5-6 foreshadowed this truth but no one understood it until it was given by revelation to the apostle Paul, Ephesians 3:3-10. The truths taught in Romans 4 are what caused so many Jews and Gentiles to get saved in his missionary church planting ministry. Paul's argument in chapter 4 includes Gentiles, Romans 4:11, because when Abraham believed God and was counted righteous, Genesis 15:6, he was still a Gentile who had not yet been circumcised, Genesis 17:23-24.

Abraham can therefore be the father of uncircumcised Gentiles and circumcised Jews. There should be no religious animosity between Jews and Gentiles because Abraham is father to both uncircumcised and circumcised. Think about it. Abraham was saved when he was an uncircumcised Gentile so he can be the spiritual father of Gentiles. He was circumcised later on so he can be the spiritual father of Jews.

The secret or "*mystery*" that God revealed to Paul about Jews and Gentiles being "*one body*" in Christ was God's plan all along, Ephesians 1:10, 2:14-16, 3:6, Romans 16:25-26. That's why Paul calls it, "*my gospel*," Romans 2:16, 16:25, 2 Timothy 2:8. It is different than the kingdom gospel or the creation gospel.

Who is Abraham? Abraham was an uncircumcised pagan Gentile, a descendant of Noah's son Shem, as was Job (from the land of Uz), Genesis 10:21-31, 1 Chronicles 1:17-27, Job 1:1. Abraham became the first Jew and the father of Jews, John 8:39, the first Hebrew, Genesis 14:13, and the first man mentioned in the Bible as being circumcised, Genesis 17:9ff. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, Genesis 11:28, in what we know as modern Iraq. Ancient Ur was a large and prosperous city on the Persian Gulf. Over the last 40 centuries, the harbor has silted up so that today, the ruins of Ur sit ten miles inland from the coast. Abraham grew up as a pagan Gentile whose father Terah worshiped false gods, Joshua 24:2, 14. Obeying the call of God, Abraham left behind his pagan religion, his false gods and his pagan culture, Genesis 12:1ff. What can we learn from the life of Abraham?

1. It doesn't matter what false gods your family worshiped.
2. It doesn't matter where or how you grew up as a pagan.
3. It doesn't matter if you were slow to obey God's call.
4. What matters is, you were obedient when God called you.
5. What matters is, you believe God by faith.

Abraham believed God by faith long before Genesis 15. Hebrews 11:8 tells us when Abraham was called to go out of Ur of the Chaldees, he went by faith. Abraham believed whatever God told him instead of working to earn his salvation and you should too. Religiousity had nothing to do with Abraham's salvation. It doesn't matter if you grew up in a false religion or your family worshiped idols and served false gods. Your past doesn't dictate your future. Believing God takes an act of your will. Believing God changed everything in time and eternity for Abraham and believing God will change everything in time and eternity for you. Because Abraham believed God, God sent the line of Messiah through him. Because Abraham believed God, God sent great blessing upon him and his spiritual family for 4000 years and counting. If you are saved, you are part of that blessing today. In Romans chapter 4 we will see that:

Faith is expected
Faith is explained
Faith is experienced
Faith is expressed

1. Abraham was born in: **a.** Paris, **b.** Rome, **c.** Chicago, **d.** Ur of the Chaldees
2. Abraham was: **a.** French, **b.** Babylonian, **c.** Japanese, **d.** Italian
3. Abraham lived in the early 1920s AD. True or False

4. It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere. True or False
5. Faith is good but it's not really necessary to get saved. True or False
6. If we do good works, it really doesn't matter if we believe God. True or False
7. Abraham was born into a prominent Jewish family and was circumcised as a child by a Rabbi. True or False

Why did Paul choose Abraham as an example of faith?

1. Abraham was born about 600 years before the law was given, Galatians 3:17, Genesis 25:7, so he couldn't have been justified by keeping the law.
2. Abraham was a perfect example of a man who obeyed God by faith instead of working to earn salvation and he was justified by faith, Romans 3:30.
3. Abraham was regarded by Jews as a godly man although Jews taught that he was justified by keeping the law even though it hadn't been given while he lived.
4. Paul's purpose then, is to get the Jews thinking about the timing of Abraham's justification by faith to help them understand that works are not involved in salvation. In plainer words, Paul confronts head on, the Jewish false belief that Abraham kept the law before it was given.

that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? - Jews believed Abraham was justified by works and therefore, so were they.

"We find that Abraham our father had performed the whole Law before it was given, for it is written, Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5). Jews believed that Abraham kept the Torah before it was written and therefore, God justified him based on his works. [The Mishnah, Kiddushin, p. 329.](#)

That is the Jewish false teaching Paul confronts and contradicts in Romans 4. Genesis 26:5 does not say that Abraham kept the law of Moses, which wouldn't be given until 430 years later. Instead, Genesis 26:5 amplifies Genesis 17:1ff., where God makes a covenant with Abraham and tells him "*walk before me, and be thou perfect,*" and Genesis 18:19, that Abraham was obedient to what the LORD "*had spoken of him.*" Being perfect means, Do what I've instructed you to do. Live the way I've told you to live. God gave oral instructions to Abraham as part of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is different than the Mosaic Covenant, which was given 430 years later.

In Luke 16:27-31, Abraham had something interesting to say about the importance of the written word of God. According to Jesus, Abraham said: *“If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”* In OT and NT times, most people didn’t have a personal copy of the scriptures to read. So instead of reading the Bible, they listened to someone read the Bible. They heard the Jewish priests read the scriptures out loud in the street or in the temple in OT times or in the synagogues or in the shuls, (Yiddish for houses of prayer) and in the temple in NT times, Nehemiah 8:1-8.

God spoke to Abraham but that’s not the same as Abraham having the law of Moses. Abraham’s justification didn’t make him or anyone else righteous and circumcision never makes anyone righteous. God is not as shallow as religious people think He is. With God, it’s never about the symbol - it’s always about the substance. With God it’s never about the ritual - it’s always about the reality. In essence, Paul is explaining to Jewish religious folks that their religion can never justify them. Simply put, keeping the law of Moses never justified anyone. God counted Abraham righteous because of his faith; He didn’t make him righteous.

“And by him [Jesus] all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Acts 13:39

In modern terms, religion is never the way to God and never the way to heaven. The Baptist religion and the Methodist religion and the Catholic religion and the Mormon religion and your religion cannot make anyone righteous. God never plays religious games. Paul’s authority and knowledge about justification by faith comes directly from Jesus, Acts 9:1ff., 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

In Romans 4, Paul explains to Jewish religious folks and everyone else who reads Romans over a time span of almost two thousand years that their religion, any religion, can never justify them. That is a difficult truth for many religious people to accept. In the mid-first century AD when Paul writes Romans, there were hundreds of pagan temples representing false gods and false religions in Rome. Our human tendency is to work for salvation instead of simply believing God by faith. Note that Paul doesn’t say God made Abraham righteous. Instead, God counted Abraham righteous. Righteous was his standing with God, not his actual state. God does the same thing for us when we believe Him. He doesn’t make us righteous; He imputes righteousness to us and counts us righteous.

When we get saved, we are justified by faith, which means God gives us the righteousness of Christ as a free gift. That doesn't make us righteous in the sense of being sinless like Jesus. Righteous is our standing before God but our actual state is, we are still sinners. When God counts you righteous, other opinions don't matter. Accept God's verdict and live the rest of your life like Paul, as a joyful servant of Jesus Christ, Romans 1:1.

Discuss and explain the difference between your standing in Christ and your actual state in the real world. How can God give us the righteousness of Christ and yet, our practical reality is, we are still sinners? More info on p. 28.

Are you willing to believe God when believing God seems foolish, when believing seems like it cannot possibly be enough? After we've believed God for salvation, how many times have we missed blessings God had for us by not believing God, by not knowing or caring or trusting what He says in the Bible on other issues? When Abraham believed God, what did he find?

1. Abraham found that he could not work his way to heaven.
2. Abraham found that God would not accept human works.
3. Abraham found that God would accept his human faith.
4. Abraham found that God is faithful to keep his promises.
5. Abraham found that God didn't need any help from him.
6. Abraham found that God's grace is abundant and sufficient.
7. Abraham found that living by faith is the best way to live.

4:2 - For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. - Abraham and all of us could boast and glory before men. Men can't always tell when we're lying because they can't see our motives and the sin in our heart. But it's another matter to boast before God. If Abraham had lived such a pure and holy life that God justified him for his works, he would have reason to glory. But the truth is, Abraham couldn't glory before God because God could see Abraham's heart and God didn't justify him for his works.

Remember what the LORD said to Samuel the prophet in 1 Samuel 16:7? *"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."* It is important to remember that Abraham's salvation is not NT salvation. Abraham did not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to get saved, in spite of Galatians 3:8 and John 8:56.

Paul begins Romans 4 by implying that Abraham was not justified by works and that is a problem because the book of James says he was. Paul says if Abraham was justified by works, he could glory but not before God because he would be glorying in his own works instead of glorying in the grace of God. Remember that both Paul and James are writing under inspiration of God. For that reason, James never contradicts Paul and Paul never contradicts James because the Holy Spirit never inspires contradictions in the Bible. If we think there's a contradiction, it is our responsibility to invest more time in study and prayer to figure it out.

How can we deal honestly and convincingly with this alleged contradiction between Paul and James? The truth is, Paul and James are not writing about or describing the same event. It's as simple as that. Once we understand that they are describing different events, it fits perfectly and there is harmony instead of conflict between James and Paul. Before we explain why there is no contradiction between James and Paul, it is important to understand how we use scripture or the word of truth.

Sola scriptura means Scripture Alone

Bible believing Christians begin with Sola Scriptura. Sola Scriptura means scripture alone. We base what we believe on the Bible first. Our doctrinal beliefs and our Christian practices are based on what the Bible says in context. The only infallible source of truth is the Bible. Church tradition is not infallible. Papal bulls are not infallible. Religious tradition is not infallible. Protestant tradition is not infallible. Baptist tradition is not infallible. Scripture contains everything we need to get saved and live a life pleasing to God. Scripture is always more important than and takes precedence over church tradition or religious tradition and so we say, sola scriptura or scripture alone.

What does sola scriptura - scripture alone mean to born again Bible believing Christians?

1. Scripture is revelation from God. Sola scriptura, scripture alone, indicates that the written words of God in the Bible come to us with divine authority because scripture is the revelation of God to man. Therefore, What the Bible says, God the Father says, Jesus, God the Son says and the Holy Spirit says, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 1 John 5:7-8.

2. Scripture is sufficient. Sola Scriptura or scripture alone, means that the Bible is sufficient, i.e., that the Bible is all that is necessary for faith and practice. When we say, Scripture Alone or The Bible alone, we mean the Bible is our guide, not denominations and traditions of men, Revelation 22:18. There is nothing left to add to the Bible. The canon of scripture is closed, the book of Revelation being the last book of scripture and the Bible is no longer being written.

3. Scripture is authoritative. Sola Scriptura indicates that the Bible is our final authority. The Bible is God's infallible and authoritative revelation of Himself to the human race. If we're willing to read, study and believe it, Genesis 15:1, Joshua 22:9, Jeremiah 1:4, the Bible helps us grow in Jesus.

4. Scripture is clear. Sola Scriptura indicates the perspicuity or clarity of the Bible. Because God gave us the Bible to reveal Himself and His truth, scripture is not mysterious and hard to understand. That doesn't mean it's always easy to understand but God didn't make the Bible to be a difficult, unapproachable book.

5. Scripture interprets itself. Sola Scriptura indicates that scripture interprets scripture. This is called the analogy of faith. Wise Christians always interpret an unclear verse of scripture by using clear verses of scripture. For example, we find verse after verse which tells us, justification is by faith without works. Those verses are clear. So when one passage of scripture in James talks about justification by works, we use the clear verses about justification by faith to mediate our understanding of the less clear verses about works, 1 Cor 2:13.

When we study the Bible and seek to understand it, we need to follow some basic guidelines to keep from getting things wrong. Here are five important guidelines or principles we follow in our Bible study.

a. The Bible is to be studied prayerfully, with a believing heart, seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit.

b. In the Bible, the main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things.

c. In Bible study, a verse taken out of context becomes a pretext for teaching something that isn't true if the verse is left in context so do not take verses out of context and always factor in the context.

d. When the plain sense and the plain meaning of words in the text of scripture makes sense, seek no other sense.

e. Always interpret scripture with scripture (this is called the analogy of faith) because the Bible is self-interpreting if you are willing to read and study it.

1. What does sola scriptura mean? Circle one. **a.** Scripture above me. **b.** Scripture out west. **c.** Scripture alone. **d.** Scripture on Sunday.
2. What is our final authority? **a.** scripture, **b.** the Pope, **c.** a Baptist pastor
3. The analogy of faith means: **a.** priests interpret scripture, **b.** Protestants interpret scripture, **c.** scripture interprets scripture, **d.** mimes interpret scripture
4. Is the canon of scripture now closed or is the Bible still being written, Revelation 22:18-19? _____

4:3 - For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. - Paul uses the Jewish form of argument, appealing to what scripture actually says. Scripture speaks to us if we have ears to hear. Notice in Galatians 3:8, where scripture preaches the gospel, 3:22, where scripture concludes all under sin and 4:30, where scripture says, *Cast out the bondwoman and her son.* Are you listening to what scripture says? _____

Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, which is precisely when Abraham believed God, an incident which happened more than 30 years before events with Isaac in Genesis 22. Scripture provides multiple references to Abraham's age. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old. When events in Genesis 22 happened, Isaac had already been weaned, Genesis 21:8 and was old enough to think, reason, carry on a conversation and walk with Abraham. Genesis 21:34 tells us, "*And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.*" That can be a time period of three years or longer, according to 1 Kings 18:1 and 17:1. After the time period of *many days* (events in chapter 21 probably covered a number of years), Abraham begins the lonely journey with Isaac to obey God and offer up his only son. Read Genesis 21 and 22 and see if you can form an opinion about Isaac's age. How old do you think Isaac was in Genesis 22 and what is your reasoning?

The Bible Never Contradicts Itself

World War I started in 1914 and ended in 1918. World War II started in 1939 and ended in 1945. 31 years passed from the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II. If a historian described events from World War I and insisted they happened in World War II, we would regard him as unreliable. If he didn't know the difference between World War I and World War II and confused events from those wars, we would not trust the accuracy of his views on those events. The beginning of World War 1 and the end of World War II are separated by 31 years. We're dealing with two different wars, two different political situations and two different time periods. World War I and World War II are not the same wars.

Just so, events in Genesis 15 and Genesis 22 are not the same. They are separated in time by about thirty years or more. When Christians read Paul describing Abraham's justification by faith in Genesis 15 and James describing Abraham's justification by works about 30 years later in Genesis 22 and insist scripture contradicts itself, we regard them as inaccurate and unreliable in their understanding. We do not trust their opinions because Paul and James described events separated by thirty years of time. Since they are not describing the same events, they do not contradict each other. Abraham's justification by faith happened about thirty years before his justification by works. **Please note:** In James 2:23, James recognizes that Abraham's justification by faith, Genesis 15:6 is a different event from Abraham's justification by works in Genesis 22, cited by James in James 2:21-24.

Terah, Abraham's father, Genesis 11:26, died at age 205, Genesis 11:32. Abraham left Haran after Terah's death, Acts 7:4, and moved to the land of Canaan, Genesis 12:4, at age 75. In Genesis 17:17, Abraham was 99 years old and in Genesis 21:5 & 34 - Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Romans 4:19, citing Genesis 21:5).

As carefully as James points out the timing of Abraham's justification by faith in James 2:23, Paul carefully points out Abraham's age - about an hundred years old. Paul does this to let us know he is not contradicting James. Pointing out Abraham's age indicates that Paul knows some people may think he is contradicting James. For that reason, Paul pays close attention to the timeline and points out the time difference between the two events to his Jewish and Gentile readers.

Genesis 15:6, when Abraham was 75 years old, is where Abraham believed God and God counted him righteous. According to Romans 4:5, 9, 20-22, Abraham was justified by faith and received God's imputed righteousness when he believed. That is the incident described in Genesis 15:6. James 2:21 cites Genesis 22, referring to a time more than 30 years after Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 15. Abraham has already been justified by faith for 30 years or more before James mentions he is justified by works. James 2:21 refers to Genesis 22, not Genesis 15 - two different incidents separated in time by about thirty years or more.

Think about it. Abraham is about 75 years old in Genesis 12:4 to Genesis 15. He is 86 years old when Ishmael is born in Genesis 16:16. Isaac is born when Abraham is about 100 years old, Genesis 21:5. Isaac needs some years to grow

from a baby into a lad old enough to walk and talk with his father on the rocky trail up Mt. Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1) in the land of Moriah, Genesis 22:2, where Solomon eventually built the Jewish temple. He may have been five years old or seven years old or ten years old or perhaps Isaac was a teenager. If Isaac was fifteen years old in Genesis 22, then as many as 40 years passed between events in Genesis 15 and events in Genesis 22. Abraham refers to Isaac as “*the lad*” in Genesis 22:5. The Hebrew word Abraham used, נָעַר na`ar, pronounced nah`ar, can describe anyone from an infant child, Exodus 2:6, Judges 13:5-7, to a mature young man, Genesis 34:19, where the same Hebrew word is used to describe the honorable young man, Hamor, who was old enough to get married.

1. Were Paul and James referring to the same incident? _____
2. Which chapter in Genesis was Paul referring to? _____
3. Which chapter in Genesis was James referring to? _____
4. How many years pass between Genesis 15 and Genesis 22? _____
5. Based on these facts, do Paul and James contradict? _____

The works that James cites in James 2:21, (Abraham offering up his son Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22), demonstrate the reality of Abraham’s faith thirty plus years after Abraham was already justified by faith without works, based simply on believing God, Genesis 15:6, Galatians 2:16, James 2:23. This pictures but is not exactly the same as, NT salvation as we experience it on the grace side of Calvary. Genesis 15:6 is Abraham’s doctrinal justification by faith in the sight of God. Genesis 22 is Abraham’s practical justification by works in the sight of men. We cannot see faith but we can see works. Faith is intangible and invisible but works demonstrate faith in a tangible and visible way - James 3:13. No one knows you have faith until they see your works.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

It is likely that James had the words of Jesus in mind when he wrote in James 2:21 and 24, that Abraham was justified by works. Peter seems to be harking back to the same teaching moment with Jesus when he writes:

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2:12

In Abraham's case, 430 years before the law was given and before Jesus died on Calvary, works completed or perfected his faith because they gave evidence of his faith in a tangible visible way, James 2:22. This stands in contrast to our NT salvation on the grace side of Calvary because we never need works to complete or perfect our faith. Our faith is completed and perfect immediately when God saves us. When we receive the righteousness of Christ, Jesus' works are counted as our works. I'd much rather trust the works Jesus did and be clothed in His righteousness instead of trusting my works and my puny attempts at righteousness. When we read scripture carefully, with a believing heart, there is no contradiction between Paul and James.

1. Which always comes first according to God and the Bible and Paul: belief or righteousness, faith or salvation? _____
2. Was Abraham righteous before he believed or did God count him righteous after he believed? _____
3. Did Abraham have to get saved before he believed or did believing result in him getting saved? _____

Clearly in Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6, belief comes first. *"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."* Galatians 3:6. Do you see the cause and effect? Belief came first, then God counted Abraham righteous. Belief comes before righteousness. That is always the biblical order of events. When Abraham believed God, then God forensically counted it to him for righteousness, Genesis 15:6.

That forensic declaration of righteousness from God is fundamental. Forensic means that a judge made a legal ruling. Forensic means Abraham didn't work to earn righteousness and that God didn't justify him in Genesis 15:6 because of his works. Righteousness was not infused into Abraham over the course of his life as he performed religious good works under authority of holy mother church. He didn't keep any law to earn righteousness and he didn't keep the law of Moses. Remember, the Law wasn't given until 430 years after Abraham, Galatians 3:14-18. He simply believed what God said and God as the Judge of all the earth, Genesis 18:25, made a judicial or legal or forensic declaration that counted Abraham righteous.

That means God imputed His righteousness to Abraham and treated Abraham as if he was as righteous as God even though, practically speaking, he wasn't. Remember, *God justifies the ungodly*, Romans 4:5. If you are saved, God gave you His righteousness because of your faith. He treated Jesus as if He had lived

your wretched sinful life and if you are saved, He treats you as if you had lived the perfect sinless life of Jesus Christ. Abraham believed God. Do you believe God? _____ Have you received the righteousness of Christ? _____

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Galatians 3:6. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:6. Do you see the cause and effect? Believing God came first and caused God to count Abraham righteous. Did you get that? Do you see that that is the scriptural order? _____

Some people say you have to get regenerated first or saved first or justified first or made righteous first and then you can believe God yet clearly, that was not the order of events for Abraham. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Cause and effect. The application of these truths for us is that, because God imputed the sins of sinners to Jesus on the cross, God can impute the righteousness of Christ to sinners when we believe on Him, when we receive His gift of righteousness, Romans 5:17, 6:23.*

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

1 Corinthians 1:21

Which comes first in 1 Corinthians 1:21, believing or getting saved? _____
If getting saved comes first, God would have to save those who did NOT believe but is that what Paul says? No, of course not. God saves *them that believe*. In the Bible you must believe before you get saved. You see why we must always have the sola scriptura approach - scripture alone.

1. According to Romans 4:3 and 1 Corinthians 1:21, whom does God save?
a. those who believe. **b.** those who do not believe.
2. Are these verses easy or difficult to understand? _____
3. Are these verses so muddled that we cannot know what they mean? _____
4. In light of these verses, if someone insists that salvation comes before belief, are they rejecting what scripture plainly says? _____

Remember that Abraham was saved in the OT sense and God counted him righteous. He was not saved in the NT sense. The focal point of time and eternity is Calvary - Jesus dying for the sins of the world and rising again from the dead on the third day. That incredible event changed everything. The standard false teaching about salvation is that everyone in the OT looked forward to the cross

and everyone after Calvary looks back at the cross to get saved. This is said as if everyone, OT or NT trusted Christ when they got saved. The way we know that is not true is, the Bible never says that. Some people cite Acts 15:11 to prove that everyone gets saved by trusting Christ but of course, Acts 15:11 says no such thing. Please read it to make sure you understand. Concerning Abraham's salvation and New Testament salvation, keep these contrasts in mind.

OT Salvation vs. NT Salvation

1. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was not adopted into the family of God and was not a son of God, 1 John 3:2, Galatians 3:26. Abraham was not a joint heir with Christ, Galatians 4:5-7, Romans 8:15, 23, 9:4, Ephesians 1:5, because Christ hadn't come when Abraham lived. On the grace side of Calvary, we are adopted and are sons and joint heirs with Christ. The NT Greek word for adoption, *hiothesia uiothesia* means: to be made a son, to be adopted as sons. Israel as a corporate entity was called God's son, Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1 but the term adoption, in the Bible, is not applied to individuals until after the resurrection of Christ.

2. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was never born again, John 3:1-8, because being born again is a NT phenomenon and is the work of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit had not yet been given, John 7:39, even during the earthly ministry of Jesus, almost 2000 years after Abraham. On the grace side of Calvary, believers in Christ are born again and so, are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13-14.

3. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was never baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-29, because in Abraham's day, there was no body of Christ to be baptized into. On the grace side of Calvary, all born again believers have been spiritually baptized into the body of Christ.

4. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was physically circumcised as a seal, a sign and a token of the covenant, Genesis 17:23-24, Romans 4:11 but he was never spiritually circumcised, Colossians 2:11-15 so his saved soul was not cut loose from his unsaved body. On the grace side of Calvary, all born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, including females, are spiritually circumcised and their saved soul is cut loose from their unsaved body.

5. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was not permanently sealed by the Holy

Spirit unto the day of redemption, Ephesians 1:13-14. In the OT, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was selective and temporary. The Spirit was in some, upon some and filled some but in the OT the Spirit did not permanently indwell anyone. That is why King David prayed in Psalm 51:11 - *"take not thy holy spirit from me."* On the grace side of Calvary, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells all born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. That permanent indwelling is God's earnest or guarantee that He will keep us until the redemption of us, the purchased possession, Ephesians 1:13-14.

6. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, was saved but he was not *seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Ephesians 2:6. On the grace side of Calvary all born again believers are *seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. That is one of the reasons why you cannot lose your salvation. If you are saved, you are already in heaven while still living on earth.

7. Abraham, on the law side of Calvary, did not go to heaven when he died. Instead, he went to a place which Jesus referred to as *"Abraham's bosom,"* Luke 16:22, which was in the heart of the earth. On the grace side of Calvary, all born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ go to heaven when they die, as Paul testified in Ephesians 2:6, Philippians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:8.

The blessings of NT salvation, Ephesians 1:3, are reserved for born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, on the grace side of Calvary. No one in the OT, on the Law side of Calvary, received those NT blessings.

4:3 - Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. - There's a lot contained in those words. First, notice the order of salvation. Abraham's belief came before his salvation. He had to believe God before God counted it to him for righteousness. He had to believe God before God saved him. Belief didn't come as a result of salvation. Salvation came as a result of belief. Belief precipitated salvation, not the other way around. Faith didn't come as a result of salvation. Salvation came as a result of faith. Faith precipitated salvation, not the other way around. Is that unclear in any way? Can anyone honestly read Romans 4:3 and then insist that Abraham had to get saved before he could believe God?

Second, God and the Jews and the apostle Paul make a big deal about Abraham. Three times the Bible tells us that Abraham was the friend of God, 2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23. Believing God is such a simple

concept yet all of us struggle with believing God. We tend to believe false teachers and atheists and bullies and God haters and we believe doubters and folks who question God's honesty yet often we don't even give God the benefit of the doubt. Why are we like that? What causes unbelief in Christians? Discuss.

*Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?
2 Chronicles 20:7*

*But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen,
the seed of Abraham my friend. Isaiah 41:8*

*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.
James 2:23*

Abraham is a wonderful example whose faith all of us should follow. Does anyone regard you as the friend of God? _____ Are you known for being close to God? _____ What can Abraham teach us about how to live for Jesus? _____

1. Abraham's justification - was only by faith with no works involved
2. Abraham's righteousness - was a free and unearned gift from God
3. Abraham's faith - was faith just like we have if we believe God
4. Abraham's inheritance - heir of the world, 4:13, through r. of faith
5. Abraham's seed - which is Christ, Gal 3:16 = Messiah Jesus
6. Abraham's children - father of many nations, Gen 17:5 = converts
7. Abraham's hope - believed against hope, Rom 4:18
 - a. Abraham didn't lose hope or give up on God
 - b. Abraham ignored circumstances and believed God
 - c. Abraham didn't stagger at the enormity of God's promise
 - d. Abraham believed God and received the promise
 - e. What would Abraham have missed by not believing God?
 - f. What have you missed by not believing God? Discuss.

and it was counted unto him for righteousness. - In the Bible, belief always comes before salvation. God never saves you first so you can believe afterward. God saves you after you believe. If that isn't crystal clear, please raise your hand. Some people teach that God has to regenerate you against your will before you can believe on Him. Is that the situation Paul describes here? _____

4:4 - Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. - This follows on from v. 3. *Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* If you insist on working to earn righteousness, work never equals grace. Work places God in debt and cancels grace. Paul is arguing to Jews who believed that Abraham was justified by works, that he was most definitely not justified by works and neither are they and neither are we.

Isn't it interesting that everything good Abraham got, he got by faith? The Jews claimed to be walking in Abraham's footsteps but they were counting on works to save them and were not living by faith. Abraham didn't live that way and neither should we. God's amazing grace should be the theme of our life. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.* 2 Corinthians 5:7. It's a real paradox but walking by sight gets you nowhere with God. *The just shall live by faith,* Romans 1:17.

4:5 - But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.- If you insist on working to earn your salvation, God will insist on NOT saving you. What is unclear about v. 4? *Now to him that worketh not but believeth.* "Yes Lord but you see, My way is better and wiser and safer than the Bible way." And God responds: "Your way will take you straight to hell and eternal punishment." Don't over-think salvation. Just believe God like Abraham did and all will be well, for you and for everyone else who believes God.

"To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 15

the ungodly - Romans 4:5 may be the greatest verse in the Bible. *God justifies the ungodly.* Since all are sinners, Romans 3:23, no one is godly therefore all are ungodly. The only people God can justify are the ungodly. That means you qualify to be justified IF you will believe in Jesus by faith.

Remember, the Jews believed that Abraham had kept the law of God perfectly and [that's](#) why God counted it to him for righteousness. "We find that Abraham our father performed the entire Torah [even] before it was given, as it says, "Because Abraham listened to my voice, and observed my statutes, my commandments, laws and and teachings. (Genesis 26:5)"

Genesis 26:5 is the basis for this Jewish belief. Job 22:22 and 23:12 explain that, in the patriarchal age, God conveyed His statutes, commandments, laws and

teachings verbally or “*from his mouth.*” Jews believed that Abraham kept the Torah (the law of Moses) before it was written and so, God justified him based on his works. [Mishnah Kiddushin 4:14](#).

“For Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life; and behold, he did not complete four jubilees in his life, when he had grown old by reason of the wickedness, and was full of his days.” Book of Jubilees 23:10. Jubilees was written around 105 BC. It shows us the Jewish view of Abraham 150 years before Paul wrote Romans in AD 58.

“Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous, have not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you, but you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.”

That quotation is the Apocryphal or fake Prayer of King Manasseh 709-643 BC (2 Chronicles 33:12-13), verse 8. Manasseh never actually prayed that prayer. It was made up and written down after the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, some seven hundred years after Manasseh died. We cite it to show the Jewish view of Abraham around AD 58.

Paul confronts the Jewish false teaching about works salvation head on, yet with kind and gentle grace. Paul’s argument is: If the greatest follower of God in the Old Testament was justified by faith, not by his works, which is what the Torah says in Genesis 15:1-6, then none of you Jews are justified by works because God justifies the ungodly by faith. If Abraham had kept all of God’s commandments, statutes and laws, he would have been Godly but Paul points out, God justifies the ungodly therefore Abraham wasn’t godly therefore, contrary to Jewish teaching, Abraham wasn’t justified by keeping commandments, statutes and laws.

1. Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.

2. What God did in His Law demand
And none to Him could render
Caused wrath and woe on every hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the Law requires,
And lost is our condition.

3. It was a false, misleading dream
That God His Law had given
That sinners should themselves redeem
And by their works gain heaven.
The Law is but a mirror bright
To bring the inbred sin to light
That lurks within our nature.

4. From sin our flesh could not abstain,
Sin held its sway unceasing;
The task was useless and in vain,
Our guilt was e'er increasing.
None can remove sin's poisoned dart
Or purify our guileful heart,-
So deep is our corruption.

5. Yet as the Law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and hath God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He hath for us the Law obeyed,
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed,
Which over us impended.

6. Since Christ hath full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death is now my life indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.

7. Not doubting this, I trust in Thee
Thy word cannot be broken;
To all dost call, "Come unto me!"
No falsehood hast Thou spoken:
"He that believes and is baptized,
"He shall be saved," say'st Thou, O Christ,
"And he shall never perish."

8. He's just 'fore God, and he alone,
Who by this faith is living;
This faith will by good works be known,
To God the glory giving;
Faith gives thee peace with God above,
But thou thy neighbor too wilt love,
If thou art a new creation.

9. The Law reveals the guilt of sin
And makes man conscience-stricken;
The gospel then doth enter in
The sinful soul to quicken.
Come to the Cross, trust Christ, and live;
The Law to you no peace can give
With all its good endeavors.

10. From faith in Christ, when e'er 'tis right,
Good works are surely flowing;
The faith is dead that shuns the light,
No good works ever showing:
By faith alone the just shall live,
Good works alone the proof can give,
Of love, which true faith worketh.

Paul Speratus, 1484-1551, was a Roman Catholic priest imprisoned for openly preaching justification by faith alone. He was given the death sentence by King Ludwig but was later released into permanent exile. He became a Protestant preacher and assisted Martin Luther in writing the first Lutheran hymnal. This hymn, Salvation Unto Us Has Come, was written by Speratus in 1523.

believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly - God never justifies the godly!
Those five words are worth memorizing. God only justifies the ungodly who

believe on him. Belief always comes before justification. If you don't believe first, God will not justify you. Belief here is not simply mental assent; it is an act of trust in God. For Abraham, it is believing that God will keep His word and provide Abraham a beloved son. Remember Abraham grew up in heathen idolatry as an idol worshiping pagan Gentile. For Abraham, believing on him that justifies the ungodly is appropriating faith, faith that takes hold of God's promise. Abraham believes God will keep His promise based on God's faithful word, not on good works of any kind by Abraham. In the Bible, believing and faith are never considered good works.

1. Abraham was saved by his good works. True or False
2. Abraham was saved before he believed God's promise. True or False
3. Abraham's works had only a small part in saving him. True or False
4. Abraham was incapable of believing God. True or False
5. Abraham had to get saved before he could believe. True or False
6. Some teach that salvation comes before belief. Is that taught anywhere in the Bible? Yes or No - If yes, in which verses is that taught? _____
7. If Abraham hadn't believed God, would he have been saved? Yes or No
8. If Abraham had waited for God to save him without believing, would Abraham be in heaven now, Romans 4:3? Yes or No
9. Which is the order of salvation in the Bible, Romans 4:3, for example?
 - a. Get saved first, then believe.
 - b. Believe first, then you are saved
10. If anyone reverses that biblical order and says, You need to get saved before you can believe, is that person teaching false doctrine? Yes or No
11. God only justifies the godly. True or False
12. God only justifies the ungodly. True or False
13. Does God ever justify godly people? Yes - No
14. Is it true that everyone is ungodly and needs to get saved? _____

The nature of saving faith is that it recognizes its lack of godliness and relies on God to justify the ungodly. To be justified by faith and given the righteousness of God as a free gift repudiates personal goodness, repudiates religiosity, repudiates one's religious good works, repudiates any claim to being godly. None of those things brings justification. God joyfully justifies the ungodly when they believe Him. We can all believe like Abraham believed. Are you ungodly? _____
Have you believed in Jesus and been justified by faith? _____

Paul is arguing against Jews and everyone else who trusts religious good works to justify them before God. Post-modern people believe all religions are good and all religions lead to heaven. Every religion except biblical Christianity rejects

Romans 4:5 and teaches the religious lie that God justifies the godly. They hate the idea that God only justifies the ungodly. First century Jews also believed that God justifies the godly. They taught that Abraham was justified by his religious good works. Paul refutes that belief in Romans chapter 4.

Jews viewed themselves as godly and they intended to be justified by good works just like they believed their father Abraham was justified, John 8:39. Paul says the last thing Jews ever expected him to say. God will never justify good people. GOD NEVER JUSTIFIES THE GODLY. You might want to memorize that. God only justifies the ungodly. Isn't that a mean and negative way to preach? Paul, how can you be so full of hatred for your fellow man? How can you be so dismissive of other fine religions? Paul takes Abraham as Exhibit A. If God didn't justify Abraham based on his religious good works, God will not justify anyone based on religious good works. If Abraham couldn't work his way to heaven and into God's good graces, neither can you.

Because *faith is counted for righteousness*, faith has to be in place before salvation. If faith isn't there first, it cannot be counted for righteousness. Isn't that an easy concept to grasp? Paul indicates again the biblical order of salvation. Faith, repentance and belief come before salvation.

Abraham didn't work to earn justification. God justified Abraham because he believed God by faith, without works. Abraham had faith in what God said. If you come to God, expecting Him to justify you by your works, you will be greatly disappointed. On the law side of Calvary or the grace side of Calvary, God never justifies anyone by works. Expecting to be justified by works implies that you are a good person yet God never justifies good people. God justifies the ungodly. Read Romans 4:5 again and again until it sinks into your heart. In the OT, it was radically different. Proverbs 17:15 says: "*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*"

What about Proverbs 17:15 and Romans 4:5?

Does Romans 4:5 contradict Proverbs 17:15? How can God, more than three billion times, do precisely what he condemns in Proverbs 17:15, *justify the wicked or the ungodly*? The answer is found in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2:24. "*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*" Jesus shed His blood to appease God's wrath against their sins. Calvary covers it all. On the cross, Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sins by shedding

His blood and God accepted His payment and raised Jesus from the dead the third day. That's how and why God can offer justification, righteousness and salvation as free gifts to all the ungodly who believe. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."* Acts 16:31

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17

Romans 3:25 is the key. *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."* Jesus propitiated or appeased the wrath of God against our sins. On the law side of Calvary, God's wrath was only temporarily appeased. God's wrath would not be finally and forever appeased until Jesus died in our place as our substitute. God accepted the shed blood of Christ and His death on Calvary's cross as payment for the sins of the world and as payment for your sins and my sins. Have you received the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord? _____

If God didn't justify the ungodly, all of us would be in big trouble. We have no personal goodness, no personal righteousness to offer God. God will never ever accept any of our good works. That is why God acquits the guilty. That is why God declares rotten sinners, Not guilty! That is why God exonerates the wicked. That is why God justifies the ungodly. That is our joyful reality as Christians on the grace side of Calvary! God justifies us, the ungodly, freely by His grace!

Sinners Jesus will receive;
Sound this word of grace to all
Who the heavenly pathway leave,
All who linger, all who fall.

Sing it o'er and o'er again;
Christ receiveth sinful men;
Make the message clear and plain:
Christ receiveth sinful men.

Come, and He will give you rest;
Trust Him for His word is plain;
He will take the sinfulest;
Christ receiveth sinful men.

Now my heart condemns me not,
Pure before the law I stand;
He who cleansed me from all spot,
Satisfied its last demand.

Christ receiveth sinful men,
Even me with all my sin;
Purged from every spot and stain,
Glory I shall enter in.

*-Erdmann Neumeister, 1671-1756
German Lutheran Pastor,*

Translated by Emma Bevan, 1827-1909

4:6 - Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, - Being justified by faith is far better and more blessed than being justified by works. Works righteousness is always inferior to imputed righteousness. Works righteousness is earthly and human. Imputed righteousness is Godly and heavenly. If it depends on me, I will always find some way to mess it up. Eternity is too important to trust my own works to save me. God justifies the ungodly. God imputes righteousness to the man who doesn't work for it. God's glorious salvation is the opposite of how a natural man, an unsaved man thinks it should work.

1. Would you rather have works righteousness you earned or the freely imputed righteousness of a holy God that you didn't earn? _____
2. Is works righteousness: **a.** Godly and heavenly or **b.** human and earthly?
3. Is God's imputed righteousness earned or is it a free gift? _____
4. Which is your plan: **a.** try to work my way to heaven, **b.** trust Jesus alone.

a. Salvation is a free gift from God that is not based on works. No one ever receives the righteousness of God because (s)he earned it. God is in the blessing business and He always gives the blessing of his righteousness as a free gift based on belief or faith, never as a reward for good works and never as an arbitrary choice on God's part. We cannot earn justification by faith. We can never earn the righteousness of Christ. God justifies the ungodly, not the godly. God justifies the ungodly, not the religious worker or the doer of good works. Salvation is not a reward for the elect or for the righteous. Instead, it is a gift for the guilty. Who can get this gift? It is for all who receive it, John 1:11-12, Romans 5:17, 6:23. Have you received the gift of salvation? _____

Think Mother Teresa or Billy Graham or any of the Popes or you. No one is capable of earning salvation or justification or righteousness by religious good works. Flashing a beatific smile and heading up a worldwide ministry doesn't earn anyone God's favor. That may look good to us but it carries no weight with God. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous. It is a gift for the guilty. If anyone ever needed and experienced the free grace, forgiveness of sin and imputed righteousness of God, it was King David, founder of ancient Israel's most illustrious royal family. God justifies the ungodly. God imputes righteousness to the man who doesn't work for it but instead, believes God. God's glorious salvation is the opposite of how a natural man, an unsaved man thinks it would work. Here is the truth.

Don't believe the religious lie

Every religion on earth, except biblical Christianity, teaches that the more you work and the harder you work, the more you earn God's favor, the more points you pile up, the more you deserve to be saved. If you work hard enough and long enough and do religious things from a sincere heart, say unsaved folks, God will accept you and save you because of your works. They believe that doing religious good works will cause God to justify the Godly. Is that a workable plan according to Romans 4:5-6? Yes or No? Why not? _____

Many professing Christians also believe the Satanic lie of works righteousness. Of course, works righteousness is not what the Bible teaches. Inspired scripture tells us: *God justifies the ungodly*, Romans 4:5.

Natural Theology

Think of it this way. Natural theology is whatever people can know by earthly experience, human reason and wisdom and by observing the created world, Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:19-20. Natural theology does not come down to us from heaven. Instead, natural theology tends to be demonic or devilish. *"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."* James 3:15. Natural theology is whatever we can figure out apart from what the Bible says, apart from the written revelation of God in the Bible. Do you see the problem with natural theology?

Natural theology knows nothing about the fall of Adam in the Bible in Genesis 3 or the lost and fallen nature of the entire human race because of Adam's fall,

Romans 5:12 or the fallen condition of the human heart, Jeremiah 17:9. For that reason, lost folks think they are already right with God, struggling with sin at times but basically good people. And because they think they are basically good, they think God is so understanding and loving that He would never judge their sin and send basically good people to hell. Can you see the importance of the biblical teaching of Romans 4:5, that God only *justifies the ungodly*? _____

Supernatural Theology

Supernatural theology comes to us from God by divine revelation in the written words of the Bible. It is information we can know only because God revealed it to us in the Bible. Only in the Bible do we learn about the fall of Adam and how we all fell when Adam fell by virtue of our common biological descent from Adam, Romans 5:12. Only in the Bible do we learn how God conclusively and finally dealt with the fall of Adam at Calvary, when Jesus died as our substitute, appeasing the wrath of God against our sins. The gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, tells us Jesus rose from the dead the third day according to the scriptures. Because Jesus rose from the dead, God joyfully justifies all of the ungodly who believe on Jesus. That is God's wonderful plan of salvation in the glorious gospel of Christ, by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, without human works.

We know there is a God but we don't know, by natural theology, precisely what He requires of us. Natural theology and human reason tell us we should serve God. So we spin our spiritual wheels doing religious busy work, joining a church or joining a religion, getting baptized and confirmed, studying catechism, vainly trying to earn God's favor and God's salvation by being nice, working as if it all depended upon us. That is Satan's strategy - keep us working to earn God's favor and salvation instead of trusting by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

If you've done much witnessing or preaching and teaching you may have noticed a peculiar phenomenon. A lost man under Holy Spirit conviction for his sins will try to clean up his life instead of trusting Jesus and getting saved. He tries to quit cussing. He tries to quit smoking. He tries to quit drinking. He tries to quit his drug habit. He tries to quit his sexual promiscuity. He tries to quit his porn addiction. He works hard at being a better man. The devil and human reason tell him God will accept him if he cleans up his life or turns from his sins yet that is not God's plan of salvation.

Some witnesses for Jesus tell people, You have to turn from all your sins, forsake all your sins and God will save you. The turn from all your sins and God will save you gospel is a false gospel, Galatians 1:6-9. God doesn't justify the godly - He *justifies the ungodly*. There is nothing in the gospel about turning from your sins or forsaking your sins to get saved. *God justifies the ungodly*. Then, after God justifies the ungodly, God begins to sanctify the ungodly. Sanctification always comes from Mt. Calvary, by grace, never from Mt. Sinai, by law, because grace supersedes law. Sanctification is never by works or law keeping.

Justification is always by grace, never by law.

Mount Sinai can never justify you.

Justification always comes from **Mount Calvary**.

Sanctification is always by grace, never by law.

Mount Sinai can never sanctify you.

Sanctification always comes from **Mount Calvary**.

If you can get your mind around those truths and keep them in your heart as a reality from God, you will save yourself lots of unnecessary work and stress. No one gets justified or sanctified by keeping the law. No one gets sanctified by becoming a legalist or a Pharisee. Remember not to forget that important fact. God the Holy Spirit directs the cleanup crew in your life and believe me, He makes it clear what He expects of you AND gives you the power to do what He shows you to do. Sanctification is a lifelong process for a Christian. Justification happens immediately the instant you believe on Jesus as your Savior. On a practical level, sanctification happens over the entire course of your Christian life and will continue as long as you live.

4:6 - God imputeth righteousness without works, - Remember that God justifies the ungodly, Romans 4:5. It's a matter of Standing vs. State. My standing in Christ is that I am sinlessly perfect, completely justified, declared not guilty by God the Judge of all the earth, Genesis 18:25. Because I am "in Christ" and Christ's state is sinless perfection, my standing is sinless perfection just like Jesus.

And yet, my actual state doesn't match my standing in Christ. My actual state is that I'm still a saved sinner in an unsaved body, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" says Paul in Romans 7:24. I'm a sinner saved by grace but my body isn't saved. Because Jesus has already paid for my sins, God no longer imputes my sins to me and no longer holds them

against me. God will never impute sin to me again or to you again because He has imputed the righteousness of Christ to us.

Standing vs. State

1. Standing refers to who I am "in Christ," Ephesians 2:6 - State refers to who I am in myself, a sinner saved by grace.
2. My standing always controls my state, Romans 13:14 - My state can never disrupt or interrupt my standing in Christ.
3. Standing is my position in Christ - state is my condition in the world.
4. My standing is, I'm in Christ and Christ is in me, Colossians 1:27 - my state is, *in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing*, Romans 7:18
5. My standing is the free gift of salvation, Romans 5:17, 6:23 - my state is, I will be rewarded for my works and service to God, I Corinthians 3:11-15.
6. My standing is I am trusting His Cross, Ephesians 2:13-16, Colossians 1:20 - my state is I take up His Cross daily, Luke 9:23.
7. My acceptance with God depends on my standing, Romans 5:1, 9, Ephesians 1:6 - My acceptance with God never depends on my state.
8. My standing is, I am a partaker of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4 - my state is, I still have the old nature, Romans 7:24.
9. My standing is, I am a new man in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17 - my state is, I still wrestle with the old man because my flesh is not saved, Romans 7:21-25.
10. My standing in Christ is invisible - my state is visible.
11. No one can see my standing in Christ - anyone can see my state.
12. My standing is perfect, Hebrews 10:14 - my state is imperfect.
13. My standing is settled, Ephesians 2:6 - my state can be unsettled.
14. My state can never make me lose my standing in Christ, Romans 8:38-39.

15. My standing is God's gift to me, Romans 5:17, 6:23 - my state is my gift to God, 2 Timothy 2:15.

16. My standing is eternally secure, John 10:27-29 - my state may sometimes feel very insecure if I live in sin, Romans 7:19-23.

17. My standing is based on grace, Ephesians 2:8-9 - my state depends on works, Ephesians 2:10.

18. My standing depends on God, 1 Peter 1:5 - my state depends on me, Galatians 5:16.

19. My standing is, I am justified, Romans 5:1, 9 - my state is, I am being sanctified day by day, Romans 12:1-2.

20. Standing is my positional sanctification, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 6:6, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 - state is my practical or progressive sanctification day by day - 1 Thessalonians 4:3ff., Romans 6:18.

21. My standing is, I am eternally sanctified, Hebrews 10:10 - My state is that I am being sanctified day by day - Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20.

22. My standing is, all my sins forgiven - Acts 3:19, Ephesians 1:7, 4:31-32, Colossians 1:13-14 - my state is, I still struggle with indwelling sin - Romans 7:19-25.

23. My standing is that I live in the Spirit, Galatians 5:25 - my state is that I need to daily walk in the Spirit - Galatians 5:16.

24. My standing is salvation, Romans 10:9-13 - my state is service, Romans 12:1-2.

25. My standing is I am a son of God, 1 John 3:2 - my state is I am a servant of God, Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1.

26. My standing is, I have union with God, Romans 8:1 - my state is, I have communion with God, John 14:23, 1 John 1:3.

27. My perfect standing in Christ never changes - my state can improve or get worse day by day.

28. My standing is the same as every other born again Christian, Galatians 3:27-28 - my state is not the same as other Christians, Ephesians 4:1.

29. My standing is my position in Christ - my state is my practice or how I live my life.

30. My standing is always pleasing to God because I have the righteousness of Christ, Romans 5:17 - my state may not always be pleasing to God, 1 John 1:7-10.

31. My standing is that I am in Christ, 1 Corinthians 5:17 - my state is that I am in the world.

32. My standing deals with *"things above"* - my state deals with things on the earth - Colossians 3:2-5.

33. My standing is an accomplished fact, Romans 6:5-7 - my state requires me to reckon myself dead to sin, Romans 6:11-20.

34. My standing is, I am seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6 - my state is, I am an ambassador for Christ on the earth, 2 Corinthians 5:20.

35. My standing is, I am a born again spirit, John 3:6 and a saved soul, Hebrews 10:39 - my state is, my saved soul, James 1:21 is still in an unsaved body, Romans 7:24 but cut loose by spiritual circumcision, Colossians 2:11.

36. My standing is that I live in the Spirit, Galatians 5:25. My state is that I need to walk in the Spirit day by day.

Do you understand this dramatic Bible truth well enough to share it with others?

The following lesson on Standing and State is Home Work.

STANDING and STATE

First, the Believers Standing in Christ

Every believer has a wonderful standing in grace: "By whom also we have access by faith into this _____ wherein we _____, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" Romans 5:2. As the hymn says, "Born of the Spirit with life from above, into God's family divine; justified fully through Calvary's love, **O WHAT A STANDING IS MINE!**"

A believer's Standing has to do with his POSITION as a child of God, how God sees him in Christ. It has to do with all that is true of the believer because he is saved by grace. Our Standing in Christ works like this.

- 1. It is the result of the work of Christ on the cross, not my own works.**
- 2. It becomes mine the moment I am saved by personal faith in Jesus Christ.** It is not gained by prayer or diligence in service or by church attendance or by any good work at all. It is all the gift of God received by faith.
- 3. My Standing in Christ is perfect.** It can never improve because it is already the best it will ever be. As part of my standing in Christ, I have complete and perfect forgiveness of sins. I cannot improve on perfect forgiveness.
- 4. My Standing is the same as every other Christian.** We share equal standing, an equal position and equal status. The most backslidden Christian is equal in standing to the best Christian who ever lived. As far as our standing in Christ, there are no celebrity Christians. When it comes to the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be great differences between believers with respect to rewards and loss of rewards, but when it comes to our standing in Christ, there is no difference.
- 5. My Standing is based entirely upon grace.** I do not deserve and didn't earn my standing. It is by God's grace that I Stand complete in Christ Jesus, Romans 5:2.

Second, the Believer's State in Christ

There is a big difference between our STANDING in Christ and our STATE in this world. When we speak of a believer's State we are referring to the actual spiritual condition or state that he is in at any given point of time. Our State is also known as our Walk or our

Practice, the way we live and conduct ourselves in the world. Our State depends upon many factors, like whether we trust the Lord or not, whether we abide in Christ or not, whether we obey the Word of God and the Holy Spirit or not. Note the contrast between Hebrews 10:14 and Philippians 3:12 when it comes to Christian perfection (maturity).

Is Hebrews 10:14 referring to a believer's Standing or State? _____

Is Philippians 3:12 referring to a believer's Standing or State? _____

Bible Truth About Your State As A Christian

1. My state falls far short of perfection. "*For in _____ things we _____ all,*" James 3:2. In James 3:2 the word "all" is the subject, not the object. James means: "We all offend." "*If we say that we have no _____, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" 1 John 1:8.

2. My state can improve or it can get worse. Read Galatians 5:7. Did the state of the Galatians improve or get worse? _____ Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians to improve their state or their walk with God and to please God more and more.

3. My state is not the same as every other child of God. Some believers consistently walk in the Spirit; others are often walking in the flesh. Some are carnal and others are spiritual. Some are trusting God; others are trusting self, Galatians 5:16.

Does Romans 5:1 "*peace with God*" refer to Standing or State? _____ Do all believers have "*peace with God*"? _____ Does Philippians 4:6-7 "*peace of God*" refer to Standing or State? _____ Do all believers enjoy the "*peace of God*?" _____

The difference between STANDING and STATE can also be described as the difference between POSITION and PRACTICE. God the Holy Spirit has baptized every believer into the body of Christ and therefore, our Position is, we are "IN CHRIST" - "*Therefore if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" 2 Corinthians 5:17. We are new creatures in Christ - that is our Standing or our Position or our Calling but it is up to us to live for Jesus day by day, as new creatures, that is our State or our Practice or our Walk.

The Difference Between Our Calling and our Walk

The only way our Walk can be holy is if we first have God's holy Calling. Justification by faith is our Standing, our Position, our Calling in Christ. Does 1 Thessalonians 4:1 refer to a holy walk or a holy calling? _____ In 2 Timothy 1:9, is it talking

about our Holy Walk or our Holy Calling? "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy _____, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*" Every believer has been called with a holy Calling.

"*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye _____ of the VOCATION (or calling) wherewith ye are called.*" Ephesians 4:1. Our walk should be worthy of our Calling in Christ. A holy walk is a Spirit filled walk, also known as "walking in the Spirit," Galatians 5:16.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, 8, 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. How would you describe the Standing of the Corinthian Christians? _____

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, How would you describe the State of the Christians in Corinth?

Every believer has a glorious standing in the grace of God, has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, is adopted as a child of God, has been seated in heavenly places in Christ and has been called unto holiness. This is our Position or Standing or Calling in Christ.

The goal of every Christian should be that our Walk or our Practice or our State should line up with our Standing in Christ. This is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. By faith we need to acknowledge our Standing in Christ and Walk as Christians.

Ephesians 5:8 - "*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye _____ in the Lord: _____ as _____ of _____*" According to this verse, what was the Position of the Ephesians believers? _____ How were they to walk? _____

Paul exhorted them: Live up to your Standing in Christ. You are children of light so Walk as children of light, Ephesians 5:3. By faith I need to know my Standing in Christ and see myself as God sees me. Galatians 5:25 - Which part of this verse that has to do with the believer's Standing, something true of every believer? _____

Write out the part of the verse that has to do with the believer's State, something that ought to be true of every believer.

Christians are accepted in the beloved

Consider our Acceptance before God. Ephesians 1:6 says: "*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us _____ in the beloved.*" God has graciously accepted us in Christ or in the Beloved. He has favored us. He delights in us. He fully and freely accepts us in Christ who is the Beloved.

We are accepted "*in the beloved.*" This phrase should remind us of Matthew 3:17, Christ's baptism and Matthew 17:5, Christ's transfiguration. "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!*" God is well pleased with His Son and for that reason, if you are "in Christ," then God is well pleased with you. Jesus said, "*I do always those things that _____ Him*" (John 8:29). As I believer, I am "*in Christ.*" It is because I am in the beloved that God is well pleased with me. I have full acceptance with God because I am "*in Christ.*" For God to disapprove of me He would have to disapprove of His Son. For God to be displeased with me, He would have to be displeased with His Son.

Is Ephesians 1:6 describing the believers Standing or State? _____ Is this something that is true of every believer? _____

As Christians, we are "*in Christ,*" therefore we have complete and eternal acceptance *in Christ.* God is well pleased with you. Have you accepted that as a genuine fact in your life? God delights in you because you are in His beloved Son. Have you thanked God that you are "*in Christ?*" Do you see myself as one who is the constant delight of the Father's heart? Why is this so? It is not because of who you are or what you have done. Your Standing in Christ is what gives you your Position with God.

Near, so very near to God,
I could not nearer be;
For in the Person of God's Son
I am as near as He.

Dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I could not be;
The love with which He loves His Son,
That is His love to me. - Catesby Paget

How does God accept me? - In the beloved!

And yet, there is another aspect to our acceptance: "*Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him,*" 2 Cor. 5:9. The word "accepted" means pleasing to God. In Ephesians 1:6 Paul declared the wonderful truth that every believer is accepted in the beloved One - that is our Standing in Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:9 Paul

points out a different aspect, not our Standing in Christ because it says that a believer may or may not be accepted or of the Lord. Paul says, "Our aim is to be well-pleasing to Him." Is 2 Corinthians 5:9 talking about the believer's Standing or State? _____

Can a believer fail to be well pleasing to God in his Standing? _____

Can a believer fail to be well pleasing to God in his State? _____

Positionally we are in Christ. That is our Standing. Practically we are in the world and that is our State. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we should live so that our State matches our Standing in Christ. We need to let our practice match our position. "Lord, Thank you for making me accepted in the beloved, well pleasing to You because of Jesus Christ. Help me live day by day so that I glorify you in my talk and my walk. Amen."

The facts of your acceptance in the Beloved and your Standing in Christ should control any feeling of lack of acceptance because of sin in your life or your failure to measure up to God's plans for your life. Understanding your Position in Christ and living day by day in light of that astonishing fact is important. The power to live for Jesus, the power to walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5:16, comes from God, not from you. When you sin, confess your sins, 1 John 1:9 and resume living for Jesus.

As you live in light of the truth of your justification by faith, your acceptance in the Beloved and living up to your Position or Standing in Christ will become a good spiritual habit. There is no reason to live in defeat when Jesus has already made you victorious in Christ. For some Christians, defeat is as much a habit as victory in Jesus. Cultivate the habit of victory in Jesus by reminding yourself of what God has given you in Christ. You are a new creature in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17. Does that verse describe your Standing in Christ or your State in this world? _____

Don't focus on your practical Condition in this world, on your sins and failures. Focus on your Standing and who you are in Christ by the grace of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you walk in the Spirit and live for Jesus.

Your Standing in Christ Always Controls Your State

Cultivate the habit of believing truth. Daily see yourself as God sees you, justified by faith and eternally secure in Christ. Ask yourself, If I do this or say this, will it get God's smile or His frown? Live so that your your walk as a Christian and your daily life gets God's smile, not God's frown. God has a lot more planned for your life in Christ if you are willing to receive it, Ephesians 2:10. Remind yourself that: Someday my State will match my Standing in Christ. Until then, by the grace of God, I will walk in the Spirit and live for Jesus day by day. -This Bible study is based on one from Middletown Bible Church.

God illustrates this great truth of Standing vs. State in the OT story of King Balak and the prophet Balaam. Israel had come out of Egypt and was en route to the promised land. They wanted to pass through Moab but King Balak didn't want over a million Jews migrating through his land, Exodus 12:37, Numbers 22:5, 11. So King Balak tried to bribe Balaam the prophet to curse Israel since his army wasn't strong enough to defeat Israel. King Balak knew that Israel was a bunch of sinners in rebellion against God, Numbers 21:5, and he figured Jehovah would be happy for another opportunity to curse and smite them again.

And yet, God told Balaam the prophet that he could not curse Israel. In Micah 6:5, Micah the prophet reminds Israel of the righteousness of the LORD, that even though Israel was sinful, God viewed them as righteous and further, God didn't see any iniquity (sin) in Israel.

“O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.” Micah 6:5

“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.”
Numbers 23:21

In the NT, once God saves you, He gives you the righteousness of Christ as a free gift, Romans 5:17, 6:23. Your sins were all imputed to Christ or placed upon Christ on Calvary and were paid for and forgiven and completely taken away. Just as God in the story of Balak and Balaam, did not behold iniquity or sin in Jacob and just as God did not see perverseness in Israel, even though Jacob was sinful and Israel was perverse, just so, once you are saved, God no longer views you as a sinner. All He sees is the righteousness of Christ. *O my people, remember* the story of King Balak and the prophet Balaam, *“that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.”*

righteousness without works - Wouldn't you like to be justified and forgiven for all your sins and completely free from condemnation? If you are saved, that is what you have in Christ. Sometimes we forget this joyful truth. A genuinely saved and born again Christian under Holy Spirit conviction sometimes does the same thing a lost man does in response to that conviction. When he gets under conviction for his sins as a saved man, instead of facing head on what God is convicting him about and dealing with it, instead of getting right with God on that issue, he decides to be more spiritual, to try harder, to work harder. He knows he

didn't earn his salvation but somehow, he thinks he can earn righteousness now that he is saved. We work for God because we love Him, not to earn His favor, not to earn salvation, not to enhance our righteousness, not to make Him feel like He must answer our prayers.

A saved man under conviction for his sins, may go to church more. If he wasn't a regular at Wednesday night prayer meeting, he becomes a regular. He volunteers to mow the church lawn or drive a church bus picking up kids on Sunday morning or he puts more money in the offering plate. He hasn't become more spiritual because he isn't dealing with God or obeying God on the issue God has with him. Instead, just like the lost man, he focuses on the flesh and starts working more, trying harder, redoubling his efforts.

Beloved, that is not what God wants from us. Christians ought to deal honestly with God. Face the issue God has with you. Don't ignore what God is dealing with you about and work harder in some other area. Humble down and obey God. God doesn't need your service in areas He is not dealing with you about. You cannot substitute your works for God's grace and favor. Works and religious piety are never substitutes for obedience. Our text says, *righteousness without works* - that's before, during and after salvation. Religious good works couldn't earn you God's favor before you got saved and religious good works cannot earn you God's favor after you get saved. *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* 1 Samuel 15:22

Abraham and David are analogous but different regarding salvation by grace through faith without any human works involved. Abraham had faith without being under the law. He believed God and his faith was counted for righteousness. David had faith too but he did live under the law and in spite of his faith, he sinned grievously. He coveted his neighbor's wife, committed adultery with her and then murder to cover his sin of adultery and yet, he didn't lose his salvation; his sins were forgiven because David had faith in God.

How can a man break three of the Ten Commandments under OT law and still be saved? The truth is, David's flesh was not saved just like your flesh is not saved. On the grace side of Calvary, your soul gets saved Hebrews 10:39, and your spirit gets born again, John 3:5-7, but your flesh is still unsaved, Romans 7:24. The fleshly nature of a saved man is just as wicked and prone to sin as the fleshly nature of an unsaved man, Romans 7:18. The only difference is, if you are saved, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in your unsaved flesh and the lost man doesn't.

How could David intentionally break three of the Ten Commandments and still be saved? The amazing grace of God is the answer. A saved man is capable of the worst sins if he follows his flesh instead of *walking in the Spirit*, Galatians 5:16. That is why you should read your Bible and pray daily and obey the Holy Spirit. Don't live like a lost man. Live for Jesus and be His obedient disciple.

Sin in the life of a believer does not nullify salvation and does not nullify justification by faith. No saved man on the grace side of Calvary ever lost his salvation because he sinned. How can that be? Because a saved man is kept by the power of God unto salvation, 1 Peter 1:5. We are kept by God the Holy Spirit, Who guarantees that we will end up in heaven, Ephesians 1:13-14. We are not kept by our own efforts or our good works. That's not an excuse to sin. Instead, it should encourage us to serve God with *a pure heart fervently*.

Paul uses Abraham and David to prove that no one anywhere is ever justified by works, not before law, not under law, not after the law ended and not after the NT went into effect. Human effort, human goodness, human sincerity, human religion are never the basis for salvation. It goes against the way we think things ought to work but God never accepts human religion and human righteousness as part of getting saved. No matter what logic we use to prove otherwise, the bottom line is: no one anywhere is ever justified by works - not good people, not bad people; not the irreligious heathen and certainly not the religious heathen.

Some people think, If only we could fan into brilliant flame that tiny spark of divinity which resides in every human being and yet, the Bible knows nothing and says nothing about that spark of divinity because there is no spark of divinity. We are fallen in Adam, Romans 5:12, and therefore, while we may not be as bad as we can be, we are as bad off as we can possibly be and we all need the Lord Jesus Christ because He is God's answer to our sin problem, not some imaginary spark of divinity. *Man at his best state is altogether vanity*, Psalm 39:5.

Abraham is Paul's prime example of the folly of works and the absolute necessity of faith and God's amazing grace. If anyone in the OT could have earned righteousness, it was Abraham. Although he grew up in an idolatrous culture, he believed God and obeyed God and for doing so, he received the righteousness of God as a free gift. Nothing about Abraham's character or pagan religion did anything to save him. Abraham's works did not assist his salvation.

What about the heathen who have never heard?

When someone asks, What about the heathen who never heard, remind them of Abraham. Remember, Abraham was a pagan Gentile, a heathen who had never heard from God until God spoke to him personally. Getting saved is all about how we respond when God speaks to us and convicts us that we need to get saved. *Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness*, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3. Belief is not a work. Belief is God's condition for salvation.

What about the heathen who have never heard? If God can reach the heart of a pagan heathen idolater like Abraham around 2000 BC when no one anywhere on earth had a Bible to read or a synagogue or church to attend, saving and justifying him by faith BEFORE the Bible had been written and circulated, God can certainly reach the hearts of pagans across the span of four thousand years of OT history and church history, with the truth of the glorious gospel of Christ, if their hearts are willing to receive truth and believe God. David is another perfect example of God justifying the ungodly. Paul quotes King David in Psalm 32:1-2.

4:7 - Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. - b. On the grace side of Calvary, when you get saved your sins are forgiven forever. God never unforgives sins and God never forgives your sins and then tells you to do good works to make sure they stay forgiven. A wise man will read that again and take it to heart. *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."* Isaiah 43:25. Aren't you glad, when we get saved, God forgives and forgets all our sins?

Simply put, people who are justified by faith are blessed and happy to be saved. That doesn't mean their lives are easy and they never have problems. Paul's point is to contrast the state of the righteous with the state of the wicked. He does that by quoting the Psalms of King David.

Bible truth about sins

A. Sins are removed. When your sins are forgiven, God removes your sins *"as far as the east is from the west."*

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12. But in the OT sins are only covered, not gone.

B. Sins are cast behind God's back. God casts your sins behind His back. *"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."* Isaiah 38:17. But in the OT, sins are only covered, not gone.

C. Sins are forgotten. God remembers your sins no more. *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."* Isaiah 43:25. But in the OT, sins are only covered, not gone.

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, (because God delights in justifying the ungodly, Romans 4:5) and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Hebrews 8:12. But in the OT sins are only covered, not entirely gone.

D. Sins are blotted out. *"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."* Isaiah 44:22
But in the OT, sins are only covered, not gone. In the NT, sins are not just covered, they are, Gone, gone, gone, gone, Yes, my sins are gone! Now my soul is free and in my hearts a song.

There's a glad song in my heart today,
Something I never had;
**Jesus has taken my sins all away,
Oh, say but I'm glad.**

Oh, say, but I'm glad, I'm glad,
Oh, say, but I'm glad,
Jesus has come and my cup's overrun;
Oh, say but I'm glad.

Wonderful, marvelous love He brings,
Into a heart that's sad;
Through darkest tunnels the soul just sings,
Oh, say but I'm glad.

We have a fellowship rich and sweet,
Tongues can never relate;
Abiding in Him is the soul's Retreat—
Oh, say but it's great.

Won't you come to Him with all your care,
Weary and worn and sad?

You, too, will sing as His love you share,
Oh, say but I'm glad.
James Patrick Sullivan, 1876-1948

Contrast OT and NT forgiveness of sins

God forgave sins in the OT and people experienced the joy of salvation and sins forgiven but remember, on the law side of Calvary, although sins were forgiven and removed, they were only covered, not taken away, Hebrews 10:4. David and Isaiah use extravagant language to describe forgiveness of sins but on the law side of Calvary they didn't have the NT revelation we have today. God reveals His truth across the centuries, over a long period of time.

The Bible was written [between 1900 BC](#) (Job) and AD 98 (Revelation). OT saints didn't know everything we know today. Their OT situation on the law side of Calvary cannot compare with our situation on the grace side of Calvary. Our sins are forgiven but not just covered like sins in the OT. On the grace side of Calvary our sins are literally gone, taken away and in their place, we have the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ as a free and eternal gift of God's amazing grace.

What happened to our sins? They were imputed to or laid on Christ.

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6*

God laid our sins on Jesus or imputed our sins to Jesus. God treated Jesus as if He had committed my sins so that, on the cross, God poured out His wrath upon Jesus for my sins. When Jesus cried out, *"It is finished,"* John 19:30, everything necessary to appease God's wrath was accomplished and finished. God the Son paid for my sins and God the Father accepted His payment. When I receive *the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,* Romans 6:23, God the Holy Spirit:

1. Justifies me by faith, Romans 5:1
2. Sanctifies me by faith, Acts 26:18
3. Gives me the righteousness of Christ as a free gift of grace, Romans 5:17
4. Baptizes me into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13

5. Spiritually circumcises me, Col 2:11-13, cutting my soul loose from my physical body and setting me free from the body of this flesh, Romans 7:24-25

6. Permanently indwells my physical body as the earnest or guarantee of my inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, Ephesians 1:13-14.

OT - sins were forgiven but not cleared, Exodus 34:7

OT - sins were covered but not taken away, Romans 4:7

OT - sacrifices could not make anyone perfect, Hebrews 9:9

NT - Jesus' blood for remission of sins that are past, Romans 3:25

NT - Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins forever, Hebrews 10:12

NT - by one offering we are perfected forever, Hebrews 10:14

Jesus is a great Savior

Jesus is a great Friend

Jesus is a great Brother

God is a great Father

God is a great Forgiver of our sins

God is a great Forgetter of our sins

whose iniquities are forgiven - To have your iniquities (sins) forgiven means that God has dealt with them in a way that allows you to be right with God and have fellowship with Him while allowing God to be just and the justifier of everyone who believes in Jesus, Romans 3:26. In other words, God didn't break His law or do anything wrong to save you. Your salvation is all on the up and up. There was no secret sordid back room deal. On the grace side of Calvary, when God forgives your sins, He does it so completely and thoroughly that He never has to deal with them again.

whose sins are covered - There is a difference between the way sins were forgiven in the OT on the law side of Calvary and the way sins are forgiven in the NT on the grace side of Calvary. This was discussed in chapter 3 when we taught about propitiation. That is the biblical truth that Jesus dying on Calvary for our sins, appeased the wrath of God against our sins finally and forever.

When David pens Psalm 32, he writes from the perspective of an OT believer living under the law of Moses. On the law side of Calvary, sins were forgiven and covered but were not taken away because *"it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,"* Hebrews 10:4. For as long as a saved

man lived in the OT, his sins were forgiven and covered but they were not taken away.

Only Jesus, dying on the cross for the sins of the world could take away our sins. *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* 1 John 2:2. As *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*, John 1:29, Jesus ushered in the new covenant or the New Testament and made the Old Testament *obsolete*, Hebrews 8:13, *done away* and *abolished*, 2 Corinthians 3:11-13. On the grace side of Calvary, your sins are not just forgiven and covered, they are taken away.

4:8 - Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. - Once God has imputed His righteousness to you, He cannot and will not impute sin. That is an incredible blessing! Psalm 32:1-2 has a different meaning for us on the grace side of Calvary than it had for OT saints on the law side of Calvary. OT saints had to keep offering the sacrifices God required under Moses' law and yet those sacrifices which they *offered continually year by year could never make the comers thereunto perfect*, Hebrews 10:1. They had to keep the law and worship God, not idols. If they served false gods and worshiped idols, that indicated their sacrifices were offered from an insincere or false heart toward God and He promised to cut them off and remove them from the land, Leviticus 18:24-30.

Because we are saved, God no longer views us as sinners even though we are still sinners. Even when you commit sins, God doesn't view you as a sinner. And once you are saved, God will never impute your sins to you because they were already imputed to Christ upon the cross. That's not an excuse to sin. It's a reason to rejoice. Jesus was God's ultimate sacrifice and He was offered *one time for sins forever*, Hebrews 10:12.

Because ancient Israel disobeyed God and worshiped idols and false gods, the judgment of God fell upon Israel. God sent the kings of Assyria to take Israel into captivity, 2 Kings 15:29, 1 Chronicles 5:26, around 722 BC. For more than eight hundred years, Assyria was a powerhouse in the ancient near east. As wicked as Assyria was, God used them against Israel when He wanted to judge Israel for her sins. And a little more than one hundred years later, from 597 to 586 BC, God sent the nation of Babylon to take Judah and Benjamin into captivity, 2 Kings 24:10ff. By this point in time, the power of Assyria had waned and the Babylonian Empire dominated everything around her. Now God used Babylon to judge Israel.

On the grace side of Calvary, we are in an entirely different and vastly improved situation. Jesus kept all of God's law perfectly. Have you considered that that is why we don't have to keep the OT law? Jesus did it for us. He never sinned or broke God's law in any way. These verses express the sinlessness of Christ, John 8:46, 19:4, Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, James 1:13, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 1:19, 2:22, 1 John 1:8, 3:5.

When God imputes the righteousness of Christ to you, it's as if you kept all of God's law perfectly. You are credited with what Jesus did. If you are saved, God cannot and will not impute sin to you because He has already imputed the righteousness of Christ to you. You didn't earn the righteousness of Christ but you have it nonetheless because God gave it to you when He saved you from sin, hell and the wrath of God.

No Old Testament saint had the imputed righteousness of Christ. What an incredible blessing it is to be saved today. Because we are saved, God no longer views us as sinners even though we are still sinners. Even when you commit sins, God doesn't view you as a sinner. May that blessed truth help you better understand 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In the OT, it was not that way. A man who told lies was a liar. A man who stole was a thief.

1. What does it mean to impute sin to someone? **a.** Charge sin to their account, **b.** Hold them responsible for their sins, **c.** Make them pay for their sins
2. Did anyone in the OT have the imputed righteousness of Christ? Yes - No
3. What event made it possible for us to receive the imputed righteousness of Christ? **a.** Calvary and the resurrection of Christ, **b.** a sacrificial lamb that was offered in the Jewish Temple, **c.** a decree by the Roman Emperor Augustus

Think of Rahab the harlot in Joshua 2:1. Although she got saved and served the God of Israel, in the Bible, she is still called Rahab the harlot because on the law side of Calvary, she is connected to her former sins, Joshua 6:17, 25, James 2:2, Hebrews 11:31. She was not part of the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13 because there was no body of Christ in the OT. For that reason, she was not spiritually circumcised and her saved soul was not cut loose from her unsaved body, Colossians 2:11. Her body and soul were still linked together even though she was saved.

If you are saved, your saved soul is no longer attached to your unsaved body. See our remarks on Romans 2:22-29. Therefore Rahab's sins were forgiven but they were not taken away. On the grace side of Calvary, everything is different

and everything is better. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. “*Such were some of you,*” Paul says but even if you as a saved man, do those sins on the grace side of Calvary, God does not see you as a fornicator, an idolater, an adulterer, etc.

God no longer **identifies saved people with their sins.**
Because we are saved, God now **identifies us with Jesus!**

God no longer views you as a sinner because your sins were imputed to Christ on the cross so that, when He saved you, He took away all your sins and imputed the righteousness of Christ to you as a free gift. Why are saved people no longer called by the names of their sins, even if they still commit those sins?

There are three answers. First, Calvary and the resurrection of Christ changed everything. OT law ended in Matthew 27:50, when Jesus died on the cross, Hebrews 9:16-17, and the NT began, Ephesians 2:15ff. Beginning at Matthew 27:50, the OT is over, abolished, done away with, 2 Corinthians 3:7-13. Second, in 1 Corinthians 6:11, the Bible says: You are washed, sanctified, justified, and, in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, you are reconciled. For that reason your sins no longer define who you are. Third, in Colossians 2:11ff., the Bible says: You are spiritually circumcised and your saved soul has been cut loose from your unsaved body so that you are no longer an errand boy for a corpse. You are no longer a slave to sin, Romans 6:2-6. Those Bible truths ought to put you on shouting ground!

1. Are saved people perfect or are we still sinners? _____
2. Does God still view saved people as sinners? _____
3. Does God count us and view us as perfect in Christ? Yes - No
4. Are saved people identified with our sins or with Jesus? _____
5. Do you have the perfect righteousness of Christ as a gift from God? _____
6. Will God impute sin to you once you are saved? Yes, No, Maybe
7. What takes away my sins? **a.** the shed blood of Christ, **b.** the sincerity of my heart before God, **c.** my strong religious beliefs, **d.** the work of my earthly priest

A Clean Slate - A Fresh Start

Think about this. Once God has justified you, He will **not** impute sin to you. Read it again, slowly and carefully. God-will-**not**-impute-sin-to-you. If you are saved, your sins were imputed to Jesus on Calvary’s cross (placed on Jesus as if He had committed them) and He paid the penalty for your sins by dying in your place, shedding His innocent blood as payment for your sins. The payment Jesus

made for your sins appeased the wrath of God against your sins. God accepted the payment Jesus made so that you can now be saved.

When you believe on Jesus and receive Him as your Savior from sin, God imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to you so that, it's as if you had never sinned and are as perfect as Jesus Christ Himself. Not only that, since you now are saved, God will NOT impute sin to you even when you sin because all of your sins have already been imputed to Jesus on the cross. That's how you know that all of your sins, past, present and future, are already paid for and forgiven, because now that you are saved, GOD WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN TO YOU.

On the law side of Calvary, a man was inextricably linked to his sins. If he got saved in the OT, he was still not born again and his soul was not cut loose from his body by the circumcision made without hands. He was a prisoner in a body of flesh. When he died, he didn't go to heaven; he went to paradise or Abraham's bosom in the heart of the earth, Luke 16:19-31. In the OT, a man was whatever he did.

Centuries ago, English surnames or last names often reflected that truth. John Cooper - a cooper was a man who made oak barrels. His last name described what he did for a living. Henry Miller - a miller was a man who ground grain in a mill. His last name described what he did for a living. In spiritual things in the OT, it worked the same way. If a man stole something he was a thief. If a man told a lie, he was a liar. If a man committed adultery he was an adulterer. If a man worshiped idols he was an idolater. Rahab was a prostitute so she is called Rahab the harlot in the Bible. That was the way things worked on the law side of Calvary.

On the grace side of Calvary, a saved man has received the righteousness of Christ as a free gift, Romans 5:17, 6:23. He possesses that righteousness when he gets saved. He doesn't have to wait until he dies to get it. He has all the righteousness of Christ as a present possession. Therefore, on the grace side of Calvary, a saved man is no longer inextricably linked to his sins. His saved soul has been cut loose from his unsaved body, Colossians 2:11, and he has put *off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ*.

Therefore, spiritually speaking, even if a saved man steals something, he is not a thief. If a saved man tells a lie, he is not a liar. If a saved man commits adultery, he is not an adulterer. If a saved man worships idols, spiritually speaking, he is

still not an idolater. God views him as having the righteousness of Christ, not as a thief, a liar, an adulterer or an idolater.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Consider this. The man who was once unrighteous but is now saved and born again, has the righteousness of Christ as a present possession. He's not waiting to receive it - he has it right now. He is born again and his saved soul has been cut loose from his unsaved body. God doesn't view any of His saved and born again children, Galatians 3:26, as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous and etc. That explains why, *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* Psalm 32:1-2, Romans 4:7-8

4:9 - Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. - The Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12 included the Gentiles! That is an extraordinary blessing for those of us who are not Jewish. God's chosen people, the Jews, didn't want Jesus as their Messiah. Because they rejected Jesus, God rejected them and brought in the church age so that the Gentiles could be evangelized and they could then evangelize the Jews.

Again, Paul carefully points out the Genesis 15:1-6 time frame, noting when God justified Abraham and imputed righteousness to him. That happened more than thirty years before Genesis 22 when he offered Isaac to God upon the altar. This isn't a fake explanation or a sneaky way to explain the apparent contradiction between Paul and James. Instead, it is precisely Paul's argument and since *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, 2 Timothy 3:16, it is also God's argument and God's explanation.

God saved and justified Abraham when he was uncircumcised. That means God saves Gentiles as well as Jews. Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 15, circumcised in Genesis 17 and justified by works in Genesis 22. No one is ever

justified by works before he is justified by faith. You have to be justified by faith before you can be justified by works. Far too many professing Christians get that backwards. God's way, the Bible way, is the best way to understand justification by faith. No one is ever justified by works before he is justified by faith. Think about that truth and rejoice. That is essentially the point Paul makes in Romans chapter 4.

faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. - It should be pointed out that Abraham had to have faith, had to believe God before God imputed righteousness to him. Faith first, then righteousness. That is always the Bible way and there are no exceptions to that biblical rule. Regardless what anyone tells you, God didn't justify Abraham while he was in unbelief. He justified him after he believed. Abraham didn't get the righteousness of God imputed to him while he was an unbeliever and then, afterward, have faith and believe God. The faith of Abraham came first - Abraham believed God first, and then God reckoned it to Abraham for righteousness because Abraham had faith first.

It should be pointed out that Abraham's faith was in God. Abraham wasn't trusting his faith; he didn't have faith in his faith. He was trusting God. Nowhere in scripture does God reckon a man righteous before he believes or apart from faith.

Is this enormous privilege only for Jews or can Gentiles also experience this joyous acceptance in Christ? Is faith a gift only for God's chosen Jewish people or only for "the elect" or does God also provide free access to Gentiles? Remember that Abraham wasn't always a Jew or a Hebrew. He started life as an idolatrous uncircumcised pagan Gentile. Remember that Abraham didn't have the Bible or the Old Testament to read or missionaries to win him to Christ or the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit yet God spoke to him so clearly in 2000 BC that he got saved.

What about people who never heard of Jesus?

Multitudes down the ages didn't have access to the written scriptures and had no missionaries to preach the gospel to them yet just like Abraham, God is capable of getting enough truth to them that they can understand what He requires and get saved. God doesn't tell us, in the Bible, precisely how He accomplishes that but like Abraham, we trust God and believe that *the Judge of all the earth does right*, Genesis 18:25. Do you believe the judge of all the earth does right? _____

4:10 - How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. - This verse is how we know beyond all doubt that Paul does not contradict James. Paul carefully points out precisely when faith was reckoned to Abraham. It happened in Genesis 15 - while he was still uncircumcised, not in Genesis 22, while he was circumcised. God reckoned Abraham righteous in Genesis 15, about 30 years or more before Isaac was offered on the altar. God counted Abraham's faith for righteousness in Genesis 15, commanded him to be circumcised in Genesis 17:10-11 but Abraham didn't get circumcised until he was 99 years old, Genesis 17:24.

Circumcision in Genesis 17 didn't make Abraham righteous in God's sight. Offering up Isaac to God upon the altar in Genesis 22 didn't make Abraham righteous in God's sight. Faith - believing God - made Abraham righteous in God's sight in Genesis 15:6. This truth was surprising but completely believable to great numbers of Jews including priests and rabbis. In synagogues across the Roman Empire, when Paul preached these truths, people accepted Paul's explanation, believed the gospel and got saved.

Abraham did not receive God's promises as a circumcised Jew. He received and believed God's promises as an uncircumcised Gentile. Abraham did not get an eternal covenant with God as a circumcised Jew. He received an eternal unconditional covenant with God as an uncircumcised Gentile. Abraham did not get saved and receive God's righteousness as a circumcised Jew. He believed God and received God's righteousness as as an uncircumcised Gentile. All of that happened in Genesis 15. That historical truth must have surprised many Jews just like it surprises many people today but every Jew who embraced that Bible truth experienced a glorious salvation like Abraham's salvation.

4:11 - And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: - Paul presses home his point. Circumcision in Genesis 17:24 was a seal of the righteousness of the faith Abraham already had in Genesis 15:6. This isn't a moot point. This isn't intellectual sophistry to deceive us. God and Paul have a purpose for focusing on the precise time and the precise chapters where these events occurred.

1. Circumcision was a symbol of: **a.** faith, **b.** believing what God said, **c.** trusting what God said, **d.** a seal of righteousness by faith, **e.** all of the above.

2. Circumcision was a common practice in ancient times so Abraham wasn't surprised when God asked him to get circumcised. True or False
3. The easiest way for Gentiles to get saved is to get circumcised. True or False
4. The Bible way for Jews to get saved is to get circumcised. True or False
5. Does anyone anywhere ever get saved by being circumcised? Yes - No
6. Can circumcision make anyone righteous with God? Yes - No
7. Do Gentiles need to get circumcised to be saved? Yes - No - Maybe

From God's loving heart for the lost, He intended Abraham to be an example of how God will save and justify Gentiles as well as Jews, by faith, never by works, never by circumcision. After all, Abraham started off as a Gentile and became the first Jew. Abraham started life uncircumcised and got circumcised at age 99. God is serious about saving Gentiles as well as Jews. That's why He put power in the glorious gospel of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. Are you serious about using the gospel in your witnessing? Yes or No.

The grace of God and the gospel of God are sometimes viewed as divisive yet read Romans 4:11 carefully. God doesn't give the gospel to divide or exclude. God wants everyone to be saved and He intends to save everyone who calls upon Him, 2 Peter 3:9. God's original promise to Abraham was: "*in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" Genesis 12:3. God extends the free gift of salvation to everyone who receives it and no one is excluded from receiving it.

Do you believe God is serious when He says that? If so, that should encourage you to pass out tracts, witness for Jesus and be a soul winner. Remember God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 - "*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.*" God is serious about saving the lost. 1. Are you serious about getting the gospel to the lost? Yes I am serious. No I am not serious. 2. Which is true of you? **a.** I want to go to my grave never having witnessed to anyone. **b.** I want to die someday, knowing that I passed out tracts and faithfully witnessed for Jesus.

Are there rich and successful people to whom you're afraid to witness? God intends to save them because Jesus died for them. Are there big mean tough people to whom you're afraid to witness? Are there highly intelligent well educated people to whom you're afraid to witness? God put power in the gospel, Romans 1:16, to reach their sin-hardened hearts. Do you tell them the glorious gospel of Christ when you witness? Yes I do - No I do not.

For some Jews and other religious people, this truth was hard to swallow. As the people of God's covenant with Abraham, they viewed themselves as superior to Gentiles. How could Gentiles now be given the same wonderful blessings and promises that Israelites grew up believing were for Jews alone? _____

he received the sign of circumcision - God did not force Abraham to believe and did not force him to get saved. God did not unconditionally elect Abraham in eternity past and then overpower him by irresistible grace and regenerate him against his will so that Abraham could then believe God.

Abraham received the sign of circumcision - that is a biblical fact. Moses in Genesis 17:11 calls it *a token of the covenant*. God desires our obedience and because he got saved in Genesis 15:6, Abraham obeyed God from a willing heart in Genesis 17:23-24 and received the seal or sign or token of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is physical circumcision.

a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had - Abraham got saved in Genesis 15 so when he got circumcised in Genesis 17, he already had faith (*the faith which he had*), so he was already saved. In plainer words, Abraham's salvation had nothing to do with getting circumcised and was not based on circumcision. Faith and salvation came before circumcision and before works. Why is this important? Because a couple of thousand years after Abraham, some Jews would be teaching that Gentiles had to get circumcised or they couldn't be saved. The Holy Spirit put the kibosh on that in Acts 15:1, 24-29, 21:24-25.

Here is the truth. On the grace side of Calvary, Gentiles never had to become Jews to get saved, never had to keep the law of Moses to stay saved or to be right with God. Quite the reverse is true. After Jesus' resurrection, the only way a Jew could get saved was by embracing a Gentile faith. When Abraham got saved in Genesis 15:1-6, he was a non-Jewish, uncircumcised Gentile. Circumcision was an outward seal, sign or token of the genuine faith which Abraham already had. Circumcision did nothing to save Abraham or keep him saved.

Circumcision never saved anyone anywhere. If Abraham didn't have faith in God, his circumcision would have meant nothing, would have been a sign or seal or token of nothing. This reinforces Paul's teaching in chapter two, that God is more interested in the reality than the ritual, more focused on the substance than the symbol. If you're a Christian, live in the reality of God's truth, not fantasy.

yet being uncircumcised - Please understand this point. At the time Abraham got saved he was an uncircumcised pagan Gentile, not a circumcised Jew. That important fact must have shocked some Jews yet many others must have said, "That makes perfect sense. Now I understand!" Because Jesus died for all, He is willing to save all and all includes Gentiles.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

Paul warned against the philosophy of men. *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Colossians 2:8.*

The teaching that Jesus only died for a few chosen ones called the elect and therefore, cannot and will not save anyone else, is the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world but is not the teaching of the Bible. The point of Romans 4:11 is that God saved Abraham while he was still an uncircumcised Gentile so that Jews and Gentiles would know that God's salvation extends to all who call upon the name of the Lord, not all whom God irresistibly saves against their will. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Romans 10:13.

Friend, if you read Romans 10:13 and conclude that salvation comes before calling upon the name of the Lord or that you have to get saved before you can believe, you are blinded by the false philosophy of Augustine. You need to repent of your twin sins of heresy, Galatians 5:20 and pride and get right with God.

that he might be the father of all them that believe - You don't have to become a circumcised Jew to go to heaven, Acts 15:1, 24-29, 21:25. It apparently didn't occur to anyone until Paul started preaching it and eventually wrote it down in Romans 4, that Abraham didn't get saved as a circumcised Jew. He was a pagan Gentile when he got saved in Genesis 15:1-6. Can you see why it is important to read the Bible carefully and pay attention to details? God intends to be the Father of all who believe, whether uncircumcised Gentiles or circumcised Jews, so that He can impute the righteousness of Christ to everyone who believes, thus fitting them for life on earth and eternal life in heaven.

It should go without saying but if you don't believe in Jesus, then God is not your heavenly Father. The Bible never states the false teaching of the wider mercy

theory, that even people who've never heard of Jesus or who have heard of Him but never received Jesus as Savior are still saved and part of the body of Christ. And of course, the Bible never states that God, in eternity past, elected a few people whom Jesus would die for and irresistibly save while reprobating the rest and condemning them to hell.

That Gnostic false teaching is never found in the Bible, is never stated in the Bible. No one is ever born saved and no one is ever irresistibly predestinated to be saved. No one is automatically saved just because he goes to church or because her parents are saved or just because Jesus died for your sins. God is *the father of all them that believe*. God is not the Father of people who do not believe. *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."* Galatians 3:26. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? Yes or No. Do you know for sure you are saved? Yes or No.

that righteousness might be imputed to them also - This reveals that the plan of God always included the Gentiles. God was never so intensely focused on Israel and the Jewish nation that saving Gentiles became an afterthought or a change of plans late in the game. God's purpose from the beginning always included the Gentiles, as Paul so carefully points out in Romans 4:11. Anyone can get the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to him. Anyone can get saved. God made that possible by dying for our sins on Calvary.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. God made that possible by rising from the dead on the third day, Romans 4:25. God made that possible by putting power in the gospel so that anyone who hears it can believe and get saved, Romans 1:16.

Here's the bottom line. God intends to impute the righteousness of Christ to everyone who believes because *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* 2 Peter 3:9.

4:12 - And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. - Can you see the light bulb moment many Jews must have had as they read Romans chapter 4? In 4:11 God

is the father of uncircumcised believers and in 4:12 God is the father of circumcised believers who have faith like Abraham. Paul wants to make sure there is no misunderstanding. In Jesus all are equal, all are loved and all are included, Galatians 3:28.

There's room at the cross for you,

There's room at the cross for you.

Though **billions** have come, there's still room for one,

Yes, there's room at the cross for you.

Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 - Ira F. Stanphill, 1946 (1914-1993)

4:13 - For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. - The promise was made in Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-6, hundreds of years before Moses the Jewish lawgiver, was born. That's why Paul says the promise was not made to Abraham through the law. Jews as a group thought they hit a grand slam home run just by being born Jewish. Paul rains on their parade by pointing out that God's promise to Abraham had nothing to do with the law of Moses since Abraham lived 430 years before God gave the law, Galatians 3:17-18. As we've already noted, Jews try to get around that historical fact by insisting that Abraham kept the law anyway, before it was given.

The topic in Romans 4 is justification by faith, not by law. Justification could never come by the law. According to Romans 3:20, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* The law cannot save you, cannot justify you, cannot make you righteous. The law simply says, You're guilty. The law provides knowledge of sin by saying, Don't do that! *"I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."* Romans 7:7.

Do you see the contrast Paul provides? Law vs. Faith is what it's all about. Paul leaves his Jewish readers no out and Gentiles cannot say, I don't want to become a Jew in order to get saved. Salvation doesn't depend on becoming a Jew or keeping the law or getting circumcised as the token of the covenant. Salvation depends solely on *the righteousness of faith* which is always the free gift of God. Works of the law cannot give you a righteousness God will accept and cannot get you saved or keep you saved.

was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law - If the promise of Messiah and the physical land of Israel was made to Abraham under the law,

then it could not be eternal and unconditional. The law is crystal clear in Deuteronomy 28. If Israel doesn't keep the law, God will curse them, kick them out of the land and destroy them. Paul reminds his readers that:

1. The promise of God was first made in the Abrahamic covenant (which was eternal and unconditional), not the Mosaic covenant (which was temporary and conditional).
2. The promise of God to Abraham was made 430 years before the law of Moses. Therefore, the fulfillment of His promise was based only upon God's integrity, not on Israel's ability to refrain from idol worship and serving false gods and not on Israel's ability to keep the law.

God's promise in the Abrahamic Covenant was far greater than the law of Moses. because it wasn't linked to Israel's ability to keep the law. God never promised the land of Canaan to Abraham through the law of Moses. The promise of the land was made to Abraham apart from the law. And that promise was reiterated to Isaac and Jacob apart from the law. Even though God removed Israel from the land because of her sin, He intends to restore Israel at some point in the future *when the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*, Romans 11:25-26.

“For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.”

Jeremiah 30:3, See also Jeremiah 3:18, 16:15, 23:7-8.

“He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.” Psalm 105:8-11

“And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey. For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which

the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”

Deuteronomy 11:9-12

God loves the land of Israel and eventually, all of Israel will belong only to the Jews forever. God never promised the land of Israel to anyone but the Jews. That land is not for Arabs or Muslims or Palestinians or any of Abraham's spiritual seed. It is not for Catholics and Baptists. The United Nations has no authority over that land. Canaan-Palestine-Israel belongs to God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is the ultimate owner and He will dispose of it as He sees fit. In the future, Israel will be restored and for all eternity, will occupy the land God originally promised to Abraham because God always keeps His promises. The land of Israel is for the Jews. God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and God's integrity guarantees that covenant. Case closed.

1. To whom did God promise the land of Israel? **a.** Descendants of Abraham through Isaac, **b.** Jews and Palestinians, **c.** Muslims, Arabs and Catholics, **d.** whoever is living there in the end times, **e.** God doesn't care who gets the land
2. God's promise of the land of Israel and the Messiah was: **a.** through faith, **b.** through the law of Moses, **c.** through hard work, **d.** by the luck of the draw

not to Abraham... through the law - God didn't make the promise to Abraham through the law (or by keeping the law) and God hasn't made a promise of salvation to you through the law. Get the idea of law-keeping out of your mind. The law is powerless to make anyone pleasing to God so never trust law-keeping as your barometer of being right with God. Stop trying to keep the law. Focus on doing right from your heart and obeying God because you love Him. Before you got saved, no amount of law keeping could cause God to save you.

After you get saved, no amount of law keeping can help keep you saved. The law of Moses was a temporary thing, from about 1450 BC to about AD 30, Matthew 11:13, Romans 7:4-6, 2 Corinthians 3:6-13. Paul tells us the law was *done away, done away and abolished*. The law was never intended to be God's plan of salvation. Paul isn't changing Judaism or rejecting Moses. He simply points out that God's grand purpose was Calvary. "Calvary covers it all, my past with its sin and stain; my guilt and despair, Jesus took on Him there and Calvary covers it all." - Hymn written in 1934 by Ethelwyn Taylor, 1874-1950, who, along with her husband Walter, directed the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago from 1918-1936.

the promise that he should be the heir of the world - This is the loving heart of God, that Abraham should be the heir of the world in the sense that everyone who has faith and believes in Jesus as Savior is an heir of Abraham and a recipient of God's promise made 4000 years ago. If you are saved, you are part of God's promise to Abraham 4000 years ago. Jesus is the seed of Abraham but so too are all who believe in Jesus. Paul teaches this in Galatians 3:16-22.

4:14 - For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: - *They* refers to Jews - the law or the oracles of God were given to the Jews, Romans 3:2. Paul's argument is that the law and faith are mutually exclusive. No one ever inherited salvation from his parents. No Jew ever inherited salvation because he was born a Jew and no Gentile inherits salvation because he is a Gentile. No one becomes an heir of God through keeping the OT Law. It seems like a paradox but keeping the law voids faith.

Jews, Christians and Muslims claim the faith of Abraham yet only Christians have the genuine faith of Abraham. Jews and Muslims practice a works righteousness, precisely the opposite of Abraham's faith without works. Why do people have such a difficult time accepting the free grace of God? Trying to work your way to heaven makes faith void. God's promise of salvation was never based on keeping OT Law. God's promise was always about faith instead of works. That Bible truth is a stumbling block for Jews, Muslims and many other people. It is good to occasionally ask people this question. If you can earn salvation by your works, why did Jesus have to die? On the best day of your life you were not good enough to earn salvation by your works.

4:15 - Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. - The law is about condemnation, not justification, about punishment, not salvation. *The law worketh wrath*, meaning it produces wrath or causes wrath by showing that every transgressor is exposed to the Divine displeasure of a holy God. God never takes sin as lightly as we take it and God never lets anyone get away with sin. The law curses and condemns instead of blessing and bestowing grace. You may review our Bible study on the wrath of God in our comments about Romans 1:18.

Why do people reject free grace and try to work their way to heaven? Discuss.

There is no power in the law and nothing provided by the law to help anyone keep it. On the law side of Calvary, it is not just difficult to keep the law; it is humanly impossible. On the grace side of Calvary, God gives us power to do

everything He expects us to do. For example, Jesus says to *repent and believe the gospel*, Mark 1:15. Is that possible? Certainly, because God put power in the gospel to enable and make you capable of believing it, Romans 1:16.

Paul, who wrote this book of Romans that we're studying, was once asked: "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" Paul answered: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" Acts 16:30-31. God does not require you to do anything you are incapable of doing. Remember: **Ability is the measure of obligation**. God does not ask you to do that which you cannot do. The law works wrath because there is no power in the law to help you keep it but God put power in the gospel to help you believe it so that you CAN believe it.

How does the law work wrath?

- a. It exposes my sin, Romans 7:5, 10, Galatians 3:24
- b. It reveals that I am condemned, John 3:36, Ephesians 2:3
- c. It warns of judgment, Acts 17:30-31, Rom 2:5, 8, Rev 16:19
- d. It informs my God given conscience, Romans 2:15-16

for where no law is, there is no transgression - The law in its Mosaic written form did not exist until God gave it to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19ff. Mount Sinai is about twenty six hundred years after creation week in Genesis 1 so for twenty six hundred years, people lived on earth without the written law of God. *Sin was in the world* at that time, Romans 5:13, but *sin is not imputed when there is no law*.

The fact that the law of Moses hadn't been written yet doesn't mean they didn't have any law or that God didn't tell them what to do or that they never sinned. Without possessing any written law from God, Adam, the first man and Eve the first woman, still broke God's verbal command and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, even though God had told them not to eat of it. God gave Adam a verbal command: Don't eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:16-17. They had only one verbal commandment and they broke it.

For their sin, God drove them out of Eden, Genesis 3:23-24. We see God speaking to Abraham, the first Jew, in Genesis 12:1ff. and in a vision in Genesis 15:1. God also spoke to King Abimelech, a Gentile, in a dream, Genesis 20:3. Even before the written law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, God was perfectly capable of letting people know how He wanted them to live. Seventh

Day Adventists insist that everyone from Adam on, was under the law of Moses yet Moses the lawgiver explicitly contradicts that false teaching. The Mosaic law covenant was not made with anyone until God made it with Moses on Mount Sinai.

*“The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers,
but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.”*
Deuteronomy 5:3

there is no transgression - You cannot transgress or break a law that doesn't exist. Yet Paul is not arguing for being a lawless libertine. He isn't saying you don't have to love God or obey God or serve God. His argument boils down to this: The law works wrath, not justification. *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”* 1 John 3:4. First century Jews believed and taught that Abraham was justified by keeping the law.

Paul points out that the law of Moses didn't exist in Abraham's day, therefore it could neither condemn nor justify him. Paul is refuting what Jews believed about Abraham in the first century AD. A law that doesn't exist cannot condemn or justify anyone, including Abraham, because no one can keep or break a law that doesn't exist. Many people miss that point when they read Romans 4. Conversely, where law does exist, it works wrath, not justification, not salvation. OT law was incapable of justifying anyone because it was never intended to justify anyone. The purpose of the law was never salvation. OT law was a temporary institution, a temporary dispensation to point people to Jesus Christ, so they would trust Christ and be justified by faith in Him, Galatians 3:24.

When the written law didn't exist, God did not impute sin, Romans 5:13, because no one can break a law that doesn't exist. That doesn't mean that people were not sinners. Romans 2:15 tells us, people have the law written in their hearts and that unwritten law in their hearts accuses or excuses them. From Adam to Moses, even though the law hadn't yet been written down by the finger of God, Exodus 31:18, 32:15-16, on tables of stone, Deuteronomy 4:13, 5:22, 9:10-11, people still knew right from wrong, good from evil, by the testimony of their God given conscience. *“The wages of sin is death,”* Romans 6:23 and scripture tells us, *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,”* indicating that all are sinners even if their sins were not imputed to them, Romans 5:14.

Romans 4:15 is not a license to sin. The context is Paul's argument that Abraham was justified by faith alone, not by law. The law didn't exist in Abraham's day so Abraham couldn't have been justified by a law that didn't exist. That is Paul's argument to Jews in Rome. The law, when it does exist, still wouldn't justify Abraham because, as Paul points out in Romans 4:15, the law works wrath, not justification.

4:16 - Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Therefore it is of faith, - The promise of salvation is of faith, not by the law. In other words, the promise of salvation was not made in the law of Moses because Abraham got saved 430 years before the law was given. The promise of salvation came in the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 15. So there is no misunderstanding, Paul points out in Romans 4 that salvation also does not come: **a.** by keeping the law, **b.** by circumcision, **c.** by being born Jewish. The blessings of salvation, justification and righteousness, are always by faith. Faith excludes works and that is the argument Paul makes.

Therefore it is of faith, - God never told anyone, Keep the law and in return, I will save you. The law never told anyone, Keep all the commandments and that's how you earn your salvation. The modern application for us is that our salvation is: **a.** *not by works of righteousness which we have done*, **b.** not by confirmation, **c.** not by catechism, **d.** not by any religious good works, **e.** not by religiosity, **f.** not by spirituality or spiritual practices, **g.** not by meditation, **h.** not by achieving nirvana, **i.** not by water baptism, **j.** not by anything but faith. Remember, no one meditates his way to salvation. Meditation is never the way to get saved or stay saved.

Why can salvation not come by the law or by doing lots of good works? Because *the law worketh wrath*, not salvation, Romans 4:15. The law sets a standard but does nothing to help you live up to that standard. There is nothing in the law which gives you power to keep it. The English Baptist preacher John Bunyan, 1628-1688, put it this way.

Run John, run, the law commands,
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
**Far better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly and gives me wings!**

The more you try to keep the law to earn salvation, the more wrath you heap up for yourself because *the law worketh wrath*. The law never works righteousness unto salvation for anyone who tries to keep it. Every legalist needs to learn that humbling truth. If you want to know what kind of wrath the law works, read Deuteronomy chapter 28. If Deuteronomy 28 doesn't scare you, you're probably crippled too high for crutches. Jesus kept the law perfectly so you wouldn't have to try to keep it and end up failing and falling under God's wrath. That's why it's important to get *in Christ*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

That is the essence of the gospel and justification by faith. Your sins were imputed to Jesus or placed on Jesus or borne by Jesus, God's perfect sinless lamb, as if He had committed them. God's wrath was appeased by Jesus and God the Father accepted the payment Jesus (God the Son) made on the cross for your sins. When you get saved, God imputes the perfect sinless righteousness of Christ to you, as if you had kept all of the law like Jesus kept it. Discuss this to make sure everyone understands it.

that it might be by grace - We said earlier in our study of Romans that grace is the unearned, undeserved, unstinting favor of a loving God. If salvation was based on what you can do or what I can do, we could never do enough to satisfy God. By making salvation only by grace through faith, God made salvation available to everyone. No one is excluded because salvation never depends on our ability or our good works or our religious works.

that the promise might be sure - Bible believers believe in eternal security, sometimes called OSAS or once saved always saved. That is precisely what Paul says here, *that the promise might be sure*. Think about it. If salvation depends on you, it can never be sure because, let's be honest, You're a mess and I'm a mess. We're all a mess! God does all the saving and all the keeping.

to all the seed; - The seed is anyone and everyone who trusts God by faith without trying to keep the law. Gentiles and Jews and Muslims and everyone else can be the spiritual seed of Abraham by believing in Jesus. Jews are the biological seed of Abraham and by the Abrahamic covenant, the physical land of Israel goes to them but here, Paul is talking about the spiritual seed. The promise of the land of Israel passed down from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and their biological descendants. The land of Israel does not go to other physical descendants of Abraham nor to the spiritual seed of Abraham.

All of Abraham's other biological children and grandchildren, from Ishmael to Esau and their descendants, meaning Arabs, can also get in on the promise and become the spiritual seed of Abraham by getting saved. God includes all who believe the gospel. He doesn't want to leave anyone out, 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 2 Peter 2:1, 3:9. Gentiles who receive Jesus by faith do not become the biological seed of Abraham but are his spiritual seed. We're part of a enormous family of believers that stretches back in time 4000 years to Abraham.

not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, - In the human sense, Abraham is the spiritual father of our big happy spiritual family. Abraham is not the father of the human race. He is the father of all who get saved by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Adam is the father of the human race, Luke 3:38, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:22. Being in Adam is not enough to get you to heaven. Being descended from Adam makes you human but does nothing to save you. Being spiritually descended from Abraham because you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, hell and the wrath of God makes you saved and means you are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6..

4:17 - (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) Paul quotes Genesis 17:5 where God changed the patriarch's name from Abram, which means *high father*, to Abraham, meaning *a father of many nations*. Imagine calling a man *high father* when he didn't have any children. Yet the plan of God did include children for Abraham. God works according to His plan, not according to our doubts. God promised that Abraham would have children and God always keeps His promises. The *high father* who had no biological children had his name changed to *a father of many nations*. Can you imagine if you were Abraham and God made this name change and His incredible promise to you and then, year after year, you were still childless? Are you struggling to believe something God said or God promised? _____

before him whom he believed, - As the years passed and they couldn't get pregnant, Abraham and Sarah decided to help God out so in Genesis 16:1ff., they ended up in a polygamous marriage with Hagar and had a son named Ishmael but they forgot an important lesson. God doesn't need our help to fulfill His promises. What God wanted from Abraham and what He wants from us is

faith. It's our job to believe God's promises and it's God's job to fulfill His promises. If God says it's going to happen, believe it and count on it, it's going to happen.

even God, who quickeneth the dead, - Back when he was about 86 years old, in Genesis 16:16, Abraham was able to sire a son, Ishmael, with his wife Hagar, Genesis 16:3, KJV. By the time he was about 100 years old, Abraham was physically dead as far as being able to sire children and Sarah was physically dead as far as being able to get pregnant and produce a son. This reminds us of the great woman of Shunem in 2 Kings 4:8. She wanted a son but *her husband is old*, 2 Kings 4:15. God gave her a son anyway because our God is a miracle working God. In Romans 4:17, God worked two miracles, one for Abraham and one for Sarah, so that they could produce Isaac, their long awaited son. The *quick* of your fingernail is the part of the nail that is alive. *Quickeneth the dead* means to bring back life and fecundity. To quicken means, to make alive.

calleth those things which be not as though they were - Historically this refers to Abraham, who was about 100 years old when God fulfilled His promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, Genesis 17:17-18. In the same way that God *called things which be not as though they were* in the case of Abraham and Sarah having a biological child in their old age when that was humanly impossible, so God calls believers righteous when He imputes the righteousness of Christ to them as a free gift, Rom 5:17, even though saved sinners being righteous is humanly impossible.

Remember that the only people God justifies are the ungodly, Romans 4:5. When God saves us, He imputes to us the righteousness of Christ, counts us righteous, declares us righteous, and from then on, treats us as if we are righteous. Since justification by faith is an awesome reality in the heart of God concerning you, how should that amazing fact revolutionize your spiritual life? _____

Salvation makes us sinners saved by grace but it doesn't mean we are sinless or perfect in our practical real world situation. It's a matter of Our Standing in Christ vs. Our State in this World - see page 28 in this chapter. Even though our state is that we are still sinners, our standing in Christ is that we are as perfectly righteous as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For that reason and in that sense, God *calls those things which be not as though they were*, where we are concerned.

Calleth those things which be not as though they were is also a doctrinal reference to forensic justification - the imputation of righteousness by God to the ungodly, Romans 4:5. The practical reality is, we are not righteous but since God has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ, He *calls those things which be not as though they were* and counts us righteous, declares us righteous and sees us as righteous. As saved people, we already have the righteousness of Christ. We possess every spiritual blessing God can give us in Christ, Ephesians 1:3 and we are already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:6.

See again the loving heart of God. For every guilty sinner who believes and obeys the gospel, God has a verdict of Not Guilty! That is calling *those things which be not as though they were*. For billions of people headed for hell over the last two thousand years, Jesus has intervened and provided glorious salvation full and free and in doing so, *calleth those things which be not as though they were*.

4:18 - Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

Who - *Who* refers to Abraham because Abraham believed God's promise when the probability of the promise being fulfilled seemed utterly impossible and humanly speaking, was utterly impossible.

against hope believed in hope - In the physical realm it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a son. Having a son was against hope because it wasn't humanly possible. That Sarah was too old to have children implies she had already experienced menopause, the time in a woman's life when her ovaries cease to function and menstrual cycles stop. This is born out by Romans 4:19 where Paul refers to *the deadness of Sarah's womb*.

In modern times (2018), according to the Mayo Clinic, the average age for female menopause is 51. Sarah was 90 at the point in time she eventually had Isaac, which is well past menopause. Abraham at the time of Isaac's birth was about 100 years old. Even 4000 years ago, one hundred year old men didn't normally sire children and ninety year old women didn't normally bear children, Genesis 17:17. Therefore God had to do at least two miracles. He had to make one hundred year old Abraham capable of siring a son and He had to make ninety year old Sarah capable of getting pregnant and carrying a healthy baby boy to term, a difficult nine month long process even for a healthy young lady.

Abraham's faith was a big deal to God and the human authors of the Bible. It is important to understand what faith is and what faith isn't. Faith is believing what God said or believing what *the word of the LORD* said, Genesis 15:1. Faith is not dreaming up in your own mind something you want to happen and then, using positive confession or positive thinking, repeating to yourself over and over what you dreamed up and hoping it will happen. Abraham's faith was not positive confession or positive thinking. The promise of an everlasting covenant originated with God, not with Abraham. If what you're claiming originated with you and not God, you have no basis and no right to claim it by faith.

**Name it and claim it?
Blab it and grab it?
Decree and declare it and get my share of it?**

Abraham's faith wasn't name it and claim it or blab it and grab it or decree and declare it and get my share of it. Abraham's faith consisted of believing what God told Him, in other words, believing the *"the word of the LORD,"* Genesis 15:1. When God spoke to Abraham, the only book of the Bible that had been written was the book of Job. Abraham didn't have an Old Testament or a New Testament to read.

That's why God spoke to Abraham in a vision, Genesis 15:1 and He spoke to Abimelech in Genesis 20:3 and He spoke to David in 2 Samuel 23:2 and He spoke to Jeremiah the prophet in Jeremiah 36:1-6. That's why Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21 - *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* Today, because we have all of the written word of God contained in the sixty six books of the Bible, God's normal way of speaking to us is through His written word in the Bible, instead of through dreams and visions. Jesus expects us to believe the written words of scripture, Luke 16:27-31.

Many Christians today seek emotional experiences and miracles or dreams and visions or they like to do vision casting instead of reading and believing what the Bible says in context. Your faith and your Christian life should never be focused on emotions, signs and wonders. And your faith should never be focused on alleged prophecies about you or words of knowledge about you or proclamations people make. Be a biblical Christian and build your faith on the written words of God in the Bible. Your faith and your Christian life should be focused on being a disciple of Jesus based on what the Bible says in context. Don't settle for being a

shallow, emotions-centered Christian when you can be a bold and powerful biblical witness for Jesus.

In Luke 16:27-31, Abraham had something interesting to say about shallow religiousity and the importance of the written word of God. According to Jesus, Abraham said: *“If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”* In ancient times, most people didn’t have a personal copy of the scriptures to read. So instead of reading the Bible, they heard the Jewish priests or king read the scriptures in the street, Nehemiah 8:1-8, or in the temple, 2 Kings 23:2, in OT times or in the synagogues (and shuls, Yiddish for house of prayer) in NT times, Luke 4:15-17, Acts 13:15, 27, 15:21, 17:2.

Abraham testified from paradise that hearing, believing and obeying the written word of God is better than signs and wonders and miracles. Abraham said even an incredible miracle like the resurrection of the beggar Lazarus wouldn’t convince the unbelieving brothers of the rich man or a man who was too lazy to hear the Bible and too wicked to believe the Bible. Don’t behave and think like the rich man in hell or his unsaved brothers. Get serious about hearing, reading, believing and obeying the written word of God in the Bible. If you don’t have time to read the Bible as much as you’d like, download a free Bible app to your phone and listen to the Bible. That’s a good way to hear the word of God.

Want God to speak to you?

Read the Bible.

Want to hear God speak to you?

Read the Bible out loud.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12

The Book of Revelation, the twenty seventh book of the New Testament, was written by the apostle John around AD 98. According to Revelation 1:1-2, the Book of Revelation contains what Jesus told John to write in the last book of the Bible. The canon of scripture is the books of scripture which the Holy Spirit led early Christians to accept as the inerrant word of God and part of the Bible. So we would know that the canon of scripture is closed and complete, Jesus told John to write Revelation 22:18-19. We are not to expect any further written

revelation from God. How do we know that? Because, Jesus warns us against adding to His word, Revelation 22:18-19. If we are not to add to the written revelation God has given us in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, that indicates God's written revelation is complete and the canon of scripture is closed.

1. Do you believe the word of God is complete, Rev 22:18-19? _____
2. Since the revelation of God is complete, should we expect to get new personal revelation from God in our daily prayer time or at church? _____
3. Do you believe we should not claim any new revelation from God? _____
4. Do you believe what God tells you in the Bible? _____
5. Should you believe anyone who tells you God just spoke to him and gave him a new and fresh revelation? _____
6. Was Abraham using positive confession and positive thinking or did Abraham really believe what God told him, Genesis 15:2-6? _____
7. What is the difference between biblical faith like Abraham had, where he believed what God told him and fake faith, sometimes called positive thinking or positive confession, also known as name it and claim it or blab it and grab it?

8. What does it mean that Abraham, *against hope believed in hope*? _____

that he might become the father of many nations - He refers to Abraham. *The father of many nations* quotes Genesis 17:4-5.

1. the father of many nations refers to Abraham's literal biological or physical descendants, Genesis 17:6-8 and since He made Abraham *the father of nations*, God makes Sarah *a mother of nations*, Genesis 17:16.

These nations include: **a.** the descendants of Ishmael, Genesis 16:11, 21:13, 18, 25:16 including the twelve sons of Ishmael who are called princes, **b.** the descendants of Keturah, Abraham's former concubine and third wife, whose children Abraham sent away, Genesis 16:3, 25:1-6 and **c.** the sons of Esau, some of whom were called dukes, Genesis 36:15ff.

All of the above descendants of Abraham and Hagar and Abraham and Keturah are excluded from being inheritors of the eternal Abrahamic covenant which gave the land of Israel to the Jews, Genesis 12:1, 15:7, 18, 17:8, 35:11-12 and which also sends the line of Messiah through the Jewish descendants of Abraham and

Sarah, meaning Isaac, Jacob and Judah, not through Ishmael and not through Esau, Genesis 17:18-19, 21, 21:12, Romans 9:7, Hebrews 11:18. Don't miss the importance of this. The line of Messiah and the promise of the land of Israel went to Isaac, not Ishmael and to Jacob, not Esau.

Although the descendants of Ishmael and Esau can never legitimately possess the land of Israel or be in the line of Messiah, they and their descendants, as Abraham's biological descendants, can also, just like Gentiles, become Abraham's spiritual seed by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin, hell and the wrath of God.

2. the father of many nations also refers: to Abraham's spiritual descendants or spiritual seed, including Jesus the Messiah, Galatians 3:14, 26-29, and all who get saved by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone from the time Jesus died on Calvary, Matthew 27:50, and rose from the dead. *Father of many nations* reminds us that the Messianic line of Jesus came through Abraham the converted Babylonian pagan and through his descendants Isaac (but not Ishmael) and Jacob (but not Esau).

Father of many nations in the spiritual sense, refers to everyone in the church age from Matthew 27:50 to our present time, who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, meaning people from every land, tribe, tongue and nation, Revelation 5:9, 7:9. All who get saved through the dispensation of the grace of God which Paul cites in Ephesians 3:2, are Abraham's spiritual seed, Galatians 2:29, 3:16. Even four thousand years ago, God's plan was to save Gentiles as well as Jews.

Think about the enormity of this truth

Around 2000 BC God reached out to an idol-worshipping pagan Gentile from Babylon named Abram, Genesis 12:1ff. Abram-Abraham obeyed God and left his pagan idols and pagan religion and pagan family and pagan land. That was his first step of faith, his first step of obedience to God. Has God ever spoken to you about following Him, about obeying His call upon your life? _____

Have you feared to take that first step of obedience? If Abraham had ignored God's call, if he had been disobedient to God's command to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house, if he had refused to take that first step of faith, no one today would know his name. Everything good that happened to Abraham and his descendants happened because he obeyed God and took that first step of obedience by faith. Do you live by faith? _____

Application of the faith principle. The way you live and the decisions you make are important. Abraham is loved and respected and honored because he decided to believe what God said. On the other hand, Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate made a series of bad decisions about Jesus and their names live in infamy. Live with eternity in mind. Think long term. Believe what God says in the Bible.

Only One Life

By C.T. Studd, 1860-1931

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its days I must fulfill,
Living for self or in His will;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;

**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all,"

**Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.**

C.T. Studd was a missionary to China, India and Africa

When *the word of the LORD* spoke to Abraham, Genesis 15:1, he believed God and his faith profoundly affected the human race from that point forward. Does your faith in God affect the human race? _____ God chose to send the line of Messiah through Abraham. Even though we are now living 4000 years after Abraham, everyone who gets saved today becomes part of God's promise to Abraham, Galatians 3:29. By believing God, Abraham started a chain of events he could not possibly have imagined which gloriously cascades down the corridors of time into the shoreless ocean of eternity.

- Faith means believing what God said.
- Believing God has eternal consequences.
- Believing God affects a multitude of lives, not just your own.
- Disbelieving / disobeying God also has eternal consequences, which flow like great waves across the ocean of time.

I wonder how many people *the word of the LORD* came to back in Abraham's day who didn't believe God and rejected what God said or just ignored His word, Genesis 15:1? How many times has God offered truth to you and you didn't receive His truth? _____

Abraham was far from a perfect man but when God spoke to him, Abraham believed and obeyed God and for that reason, God saved him, blessed and used him and called him the friend of God, 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23.

1. Does God call you His friend? _____ Are you the friend of God, John 15:13-15? _____
 2. If God calls you His friend, how should friendship with God change the way you live your life? _____
 3. How would you live differently if you were the friend of God?

 4. Will you believe what God says in the Bible and live a life of faith?

 5. Will you surrender to God and allow Him to use you like He used Abraham?

 6. If you will be the friend of God, write down the date you made that commitment. _____
- Have you considered the truth that, Only eternity can tell the far reaching effects of your obedience to God? Would you live differently if you believed that? _____

according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be - Because God is Creator of this world and the universe, everything that God promises comes to pass. He spoke the universe into existence, "*Let there be light,*" Genesis 1:3 and it was so. Everything in God's universe runs according to God's laws and God's word therefore, when the Bible says, *according to that which was spoken*, you can take it to the bank. What God said will happen, will happen.

God is always faithful to keep His word even when we cannot understand how that is possible. God keeping His word doesn't depend on us. It depends on the faithfulness and integrity of God, Who always does the right thing, Genesis 18:25. God intended to send Messiah as Savior of all who believe. If Abraham had chosen not to believe God, God would have found someone else with whom to make His everlasting covenant and through whom to send the line of Messiah. Abraham believed God and became part of God's glorious plan of salvation. Do you believe God or will God have to find someone else to believe what He says?

Everything that happens in your life depends on you believing God but God will keep His word regardless of what you believe. *According to that which was spoken* - **1.** What has God spoken about your life, your faith, your joy, your sorrow, your purpose, your personal ministry for God? _____
Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us God has plans for your life. **2.** Will you submit to God and allow Him to fulfill His plan for your life? _____ We know what God spoke about Abraham's life because the Bible tells us his story. God has plans for your life just like He had for Abraham's life IF you are faithful and obedient like Abraham. **3.** Will you be obedient to God? _____ **4.** Will you believe what God says to you in the scriptures of truth? Yes, I will believe. No, I will not believe.

4:19 - And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: - God's testimony about Abraham was that he was *not weak in faith*. Verse 20 says Abraham was *strong in faith, giving glory to God*. If God commented on your faith, would He describe you like He described Abraham?

1. What is God's testimony about your faith? _____
2. Which is more accurate about you - strong in faith or weak in faith? _____
3. **Discuss** - Which one is the biblical way to have stronger faith, Romans 10:17?
 - a. Listening to more Christian praise music.
 - b. Trying harder and forcefully exerting your will.
 - c. Focusing on doing more good works.
 - d. Reading, believing, obeying the Bible.
 - e. Listening to motivational speakers.
 - f. Getting emotional and putting on a show.
4. Does the Bible say, Faith comes by listening to praise music? _____
5. Does the Bible say, Faith comes by trying harder and harder? _____
6. Does the Bible say, Faith comes by doing more good works? _____
7. Does the Bible say, Faith comes from getting emotional? _____
8. Does the Bible say, Faith comes from motivational speakers? _____
9. Does the Bible say, Faith comes by hearing the word of God? _____

he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, - That Abraham was able to sire a son when *he was about an hundred years old* was a miracle of God. Physically and biologically, Abraham was incapable of producing the heir God had promised. Did God work a miracle so that Abraham, at 100, could be a father and sire a son? Yes, that is exactly what God did. God renewed to Abraham the gift of fecundity he had lost due to

old age. God's renewal allowed Abraham to also sire other children with his third wife, Keturah, Genesis 25:1-6. Remember that Abraham's faith was not perfect. Genesis 17:17 tells us, to begin with, Abraham laughed at the idea that he and Sarah could have a biological son. He laughed but he still believed God.

neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: - That Sarah was able to bear a son when she was ninety years old was a miracle of God. Scripture testifies that her womb was dead, Romans 4:20. That is God's way of saying she was past child-bearing. Physically it was impossible for Sarah to get pregnant and have a son. Did God work a miracle so that Sarah, at 90, could become a mother and produce a son? Yes, that is exactly what God did.

When Abraham is 86 years old, Genesis 16:16, and Sarah is 76, Sarah talks Abraham into marrying her handmaid Hagar so they can help God fulfill His promise of a son. The birth of Ishmael to Hagar didn't fulfill God's promise and thirteen more years passed before God was ready to fulfill His promise of a son. At the time Abraham had a son with Hagar, he was still physically capable therefore it didn't take a miracle of God. By the time God was ready for Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac, neither Abraham nor Sarah was capable of producing children.

When God spoke to Abraham and promised him a son, instead of believing, Sarah initially laughed at the promise of God, Genesis 18:1-15, as Abraham had laughed in Genesis 17:17. Neither Abraham nor Sarah had perfect, fully formed faith when God first promised them a biological son. Your faith is based on what God said but your faith is rarely perfect at the start. Faith tends to grow over time. Mark 9:14ff., tells the story of what Jesus called the *faithless generation*. In the story, it is perfectly all right to believe with whatever capacity you have and to ask Jesus to help your unbelief.

*“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears,
Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”* Mark 9:24

Remember the example of saving faith Jesus gave in John 3:14-16. Jesus cites Numbers 21:7-9, and compares first century Jews believing in Him for salvation to sinful OT Jews looking at a serpent of brass upon a pole for salvation from the wrath of God and the fiery poisonous serpents, Deuteronomy 32:24, which God sent as judgment upon them for their sin. Neither the Bible nor Jesus specifies how much faith it takes or how long you have to look to get saved from fiery

serpents or from sin, hell and the wrath of God. It's pretty informal. Look and live, is the way it works.

You didn't need eyeglasses, bifocals, contact lenses or binoculars back then. Your vision didn't need to be perfect. Just look and live. Don't worry if you didn't look long enough or if you didn't look the same way your neighbor looked. Don't worry if you were ten feet away when you looked or one hundred feet away. Just look and live. Getting saved is easy. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* Acts 16:31. Your faith and belief don't have to be perfect for God to accept them, Mark 9:24. You don't need to be a giant of the faith. You just need to have a little faith. Look and live.

"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Matthew 17:20

We learn seven truths from the real life experience of Abraham and Sarah and their faith in God. Circle the truths in the list below which seem most relevant to your life.

1. We learn that God is always faithful to keep His promises. **2.** We learn that God operates on His own timetable, not our timetable. **3.** We learn that what is impossible for us is possible with God. **4.** We learn that if God says it, He will make it happen. **5.** We learn that God's work in our lives often depends on our obedience. The more obedient we are, the more God will use us.

The less obedient we are, the less God will use us. Consider the possibility that God would do more in our lives if we were more faithful and obedient. **6.** We also learn that obedience to God begins with that first small step. **7.** We learn that faith doesn't look at impossible circumstances and faith doesn't listen to all the reasons that God may not keep His promises. Faith listens to God, believes God, obeys God and takes that first step.

4:20 - He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; - Staggered not means that Abraham:

1. didn't *doubt* God, Matthew 21:21, Romans 14:23, **2.** didn't *contend* with God, Acts 11:2, Jude 9, **3.** didn't *waver*, James 1:6, at the promise of God as if what God said was too hard to believe. Abraham *staggered not*. All of those NT verses

use the same Greek word as Paul used in Romans 4:20, διακρίνω diakrinō translated, *doubt, contend, waver and staggered not*.

through unbelief - Believing God is always the issue - either you believe what God said or you don't and if you don't, you have the ability to change your mind. Believing God was the issue 4000 years ago and it's the issue today. Have you considered what an incredible insult it is to God when you refuse to believe what He said? And what an even greater insult to God when He gave you the Bible and you prioritize everything in your life so that reading your Bible becomes the least important thing you do or your lowest priority.

but was strong in faith, - If you want to be strong in faith you need to be fully persuaded. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17. The way to be fully persuaded is to read, believe and obey the written word of God to the extent you understand it. Don't insult God by telling yourself, “I don't need to read the Bible like other Christians. I can be pleasing to God and grow spiritually and have faith without reading the Bible.” If that is the way you think, your life will never be for God what He planned it to be, Ephesians 2:10. God intends more for you than a sloppy shallow faith based on emotions. Stop daydreaming and start reading, believing and obeying your Bible.

giving glory to God; - Absolute trust and strong faith glorifies God but how do we get to the point of absolute trust? For all of us, faith is a step by step process. We read the Bible but do we automatically accept everything it says with strong faith? We wrestle with it and think about it and try to figure it out and take baby steps of faith as we grow spiritually. Like a baby isn't born full-grown and strong, so our faith isn't born full-grown and strong. Developing strong faith that glorifies God happens over the process of time as we read, believe and obey the Bible and *walk in the Spirit*, Galatians 5:16. Let's see if we can make devotional application about our faith. Romans 4:18-21 shows us the baby steps of faith. On a practical level, it works like this.

1. The first baby step of faith is found in Romans 4:18. You believe but you're not sure about it. Against hope, you believe in hope. You believe but you're wrestling with how impossible God's promise is. At the start, belief has lots of uncertainty so in Abraham and Sarah's case, they believed but they also both laughed when God told them they were going to have a son, Genesis 17:17, 18:1-15. They didn't have strong faith to start with. Their faith was tinged with uncertainty.

2. The second baby step of faith is found in Romans 4:19-20. Abraham stopped laughing at how impossible it was for him to sire a son and for Sarah to get pregnant. He stopped looking at all of the reasons to disbelieve what God said and trusted that God was faithful to keep His promise. The great God who spoke the world into existence was faithful enough and powerful enough to keep His promise to Abraham and so, Abraham believed God.

**Doubt is a faith killer and
Faith is a doubt killer.**

Doubt can suggest a million reasons why God's promises will not come true. We tend to focus on our doubts instead of God's promises. Abraham stopped wrestling with the reasons why God's promise of a son would fail, referencing *his own body now dead and the deadness of Sarah's womb*, Romans 4:19. As we believe God's promises instead of our doubts, our faith grows and God can describe us like He described Abraham, *being not weak in faith*.

No matter what you believe or don't believe, God is still God. He is going to do His will regardless of what you think about it. Why not get with God's program and believe what He says and be an enthusiastic part of what He's doing? Life is too short to let doubt kill your faith.

Why does God require us to believe and have faith in what He says? Because faith doesn't look to our badness or goodness. Faith doesn't say, I'm so bad that God could never save a sinner like me. And faith doesn't say, I'm so good that God owes it to me to save me. Faith is submission to what God said and confidence in what God said. We glorify God by our faith and submission, not by our works and our doubts.

3. The third step of faith, no longer a baby step, is found in Romans 4:21. We're into strong faith territory when we glorify God by consistently believing what God said instead of doubting. As you experience God's faithfulness in your personal prayer life and see answers to your prayers, your trust in God will grow. As you experience God working in your life, your trust in God grows, Romans 5:3-5. All of that is based on you reading, believing and obeying the written word of God. That grows your faith because *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*, Romans 10:17.

The process of developing strong faith takes time. Our faith starts off mixed with doubt. Based on reading, believing and obeying the Bible and *walking in the*

Spirit, Galatians 5:16 and your experience of seeing God work in your life as you do that, your faith starts to grow. If you're one of those Christians who doesn't read the Bible, you'll never amount to much as a Christian. You need to get the word of God inside your heart and mind, Psalm 119:11.

If reading is a problem for you, download a free Bible app to your phone and listen to the Bible. As you read or hear and believe and obey the Bible and grow toward spiritual maturity in Christ, your faith will become strong, steady and consistent. Strong, steady and consistent faith is one of the marks of spiritual maturity. Another mark of spiritual maturity is exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in your life, Galatians 5:22-23.

4:21 - And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. - Abraham was *fully persuaded* that what God told him was true and would happen. Doubt is the opposite of being fully persuaded. Doubt says God is a liar. Doubt says God cannot be trusted. Doubt says God's word is not true. Doubt and unbelief are terrible ways to approach the Bible. Are you fully persuaded? _____ If not, why not? _____

Being fully persuaded is the best way to receive the word of God. When you read your Bible, are you fully persuaded of the truth of what you read? Many Christians claim to follow Jesus yet disagree with Jesus on almost everything He taught and that isn't Christian; that isn't following Jesus. Unbelief is a wicked way to approach *the word of truth*, 2 Timothy 2:15.

Being fully persuaded is the difference between blessing and cursing, life and death, heaven and hell. In the OT, Abraham was fully persuaded. In the NT, according to Paul's testimony, King Agrippa believed the OT prophets, Acts 26:27, but according to King Agrippa's own testimony, he was not *fully persuaded*. "*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*" Acts 26:28.

The difference between **fully** persuaded and **almost** persuaded is eternity in hell.

"Almost persuaded" now to believe;
"Almost persuaded" Christ to receive;
Seems now some soul to say,
"Go, Spirit, go Thy way,
Some more convenient day

on Thee I'll call."

"Almost persuaded," come, come today;
"Almost persuaded," turn not away;
Jesus invites you here,
Angels are lingering near,
Prayers rise from hearts so dear;
O wanderer, come!

Oh, be persuaded! Christ never fails—
Oh, be persuaded! His blood avails—
Can save from every sin,
Cleanse you without, within—
Will you not let Him in?
Open the door!

"Almost persuaded," harvest is past!
"Almost persuaded," doom comes at last;
"Almost" cannot avail;
"Almost" is but to fail!
Sad, sad that bitter wail—
"Almost—but lost!"

Be now persuaded, oh, sinner, hear!
Be now persuaded, Jesus is near;
His voice is pleading still,
Turn now with heart and will,
Peace will your spirit fill—
Trust Christ today!
-Philip Bliss, 1838-1876

that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. - Our God is a promise keeping God. If He says it, He will do it. There are many promises in the Bible we are free to claim yet how many times do we really claim the promises of God and see Him fulfill His word in our lives? Spiritually speaking, many Christians live on the poverty level because they don't read the Bible enough to know which of God's promises to claim. Scripture testifies to God's promise keeping in the life of Abraham. Jesus the Messiah is part of the promise God kept to Abraham, Galatians 3:13-16, and if you are saved, you are also part of that promise. Don't live hit or miss - Claim God's promises!

4:22 - And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. - Believing God or having faith in God, is a biblical requirement. Faith is the pre-condition for salvation. If you don't have faith, if you don't believe what God said, GOD WILL NOT SAVE YOU. No one ever gets saved before they believe God. The Bible doesn't say: Abraham didn't believe God and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Take a moment to read Romans 4:20-22 again.

If Abraham had not believed God, would his unbelief (v. 20) have been imputed to him for righteousness? _____ Why or why not? _____

Take time to think about that. Some Christians believe that God only imputes righteousness to people who don't believe him even though the Bible never says that and never implies that. Wise Christians reject that foolishness and believe what the Bible says in context because salvation is always according to what the Bible says in context and never according to human religious philosophy.

And therefore - Genesis 15 and Romans 4 testify with startling clarity that Abraham's justification and imputation of righteousness and salvation were conditioned upon him first believing God. Abraham was *fully persuaded*; in other words, he believed God and then scripture says, *therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*. Cause and effect. Belief always comes before salvation.

Abraham's belief caused God to impute righteousness to him. Scripture is clear about that. Abraham had to believe before God imputed righteousness to him. God did not impute righteousness to Abraham for his unbelief. Scripture is clear about that. If you don't understand that, please raise your hand.

Abraham was not born again because no one in the OT was born again. Abraham was not baptized into the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13, because there was no body of Christ to be baptized into in the OT. Yet without being born again or baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, Abraham was able to believe what God told him. He exercised his free will and believed God and as a result, was saved and justified and God imputed righteousness to him. That is the testimony of truth in the Bible. Please do not throw away God's truth and replace it with the false philosophy of men, Colossians 2:8.

1. Did Abraham have righteousness counted to him before he believed God or after he believed God, Romans 4:3? _____
2. Did Abraham believe God before righteousness was counted to him in Romans 4:3? _____

3. Is there a direct cause and effect between believing God and getting saved, Romans 10:13? _____
4. Is the message of Genesis 15:6 that Abraham got saved before believing what God told him? _____
5. Is the message of Romans 4:3 that belief is not necessary and God will save you before you believe on Him? _____
6. Since the Bible is so clear about the order of salvation and always says that belief comes before salvation, should we reject the clear teaching of scripture and believe the opposite of what the Bible says? _____

4:23 - Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

The Bible doesn't tell us the story of Abraham just to give us a history lesson. Abraham illustrates a universal truth about life and salvation, that justification only comes by faith. That was true for Abraham 4000 years ago and it is true for us today. The method of Abraham's justification or the way he was justified is God's way of justifying all sinners. Abraham was justified by faith and if we want to be justified, it will only be by faith.

The scriptural teaching that belief is a requirement for salvation, that you must believe God BEFORE He counts it to you for righteousness, is not simply an OT teaching. Paul makes it clear that the story of Abraham and the way God imputed righteousness to him is important for us too and applies to us. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham in Genesis 15:6 after he believed God (not before he believed God). 4000 years after Abraham, that truth ought to resound in our hearts too.

4:24 - But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; - Abraham is an OT saint but he was not under the law of Moses. Abraham lived under grace 430 years before the law was given. And so, Paul points out that we can learn from the example of Abraham's faith and our belief will have the same result as Abraham's belief - salvation, justification and the imputation of God's righteousness to us.

You never have to wonder if you are one of God's elect. You never have to wonder if God chose you in eternity past to be damned or to be saved. That is, if you believe the Bible, you never have to wonder. If you reject the clear teaching of scripture and follow human philosophy, you will always wonder. Abraham is God's example for all of us, that belief and faith always come before salvation, before justification, before the imputation of God's righteousness.

if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; - Believing on Jesus is a pre-condition, a prerequisite, an absolute requirement for salvation for anyone after Matthew 27:50. When Jesus died on Calvary, the OT was *done away* and *abolished*, 2 Corinthians 3:6-13 and the NT went into effect, Hebrews 9:16. God NEVER justifies or saves anyone before they believe on Him. Notice what Paul does not say. He does not say, If God chose you in eternity past to be one of the elect. He does not say, If you were predestinated to salvation. The Bible always makes believing God the absolute requirement, the undeniable condition for salvation and so Paul says: ***if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.***

1. Do you want the righteousness of Christ imputed to you? _____
9. According to Romans 4:24, what must you do to get it? _____
3. Does the word, **If**, indicate that believing is a requirement? _____
4. Does the word, **If**, indicate that if you don't believe, you will not be justified and will not receive the righteousness of Christ? _____
5. Does anything in Romans 4 say that God has to regenerate or save you before you can believe? _____

Could Paul make it any more clear? If words have meaning, the way anyone gets saved is to believe what God said, meaning, believe the gospel, Romans 1:16.

4:25 - Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. - That is a succinct and pithy summary of the gospel. It is refreshing to notice that Paul ends chapter 4 at the cross and the empty tomb. After opening chapter 4 by explaining that Abraham the uncircumcised pagan Gentile got saved apart from any works and apart from any law-keeping, Paul carries his readers to Calvary and an empty tomb in a garden.

In your thinking and your witnessing, you should do the same thing - witness like Paul witnessed. If you don't take them first to Calvary and then to the empty tomb, you haven't given them the glorious gospel of Christ. The thing that makes the gospel glorious is the resurrection of Christ. Let's be honest. Most of us witness the wrong way. We talk about the love of Jesus and we tell people to trust Jesus and He will save them or trust Jesus and He will make your life better but beloved, that is not the gospel.

What makes it possible for God to justify the ungodly, Romans 4:5? The answer is found in Romans 4:25. Jesus was delivered for our offences, and was raised

again for our justification. Whenever possible, take time to explain Calvary and the gospel when you witness.

Who was delivered - *Who* refers to Jesus as the One who was delivered. To explore v. 25, we must ask at least four important questions.

A. Who delivered Jesus? Since Jesus was delivered, common sense tells us someone delivered Him. The answer to that question goes all the way back to an event that happened 4000 years ago in Genesis 22.

1. Abraham delivered up Isaac, a type of Jesus Christ, Genesis 22:1-8.
2. Judas delivered Jesus to chief priests, Matt 17:22, 20:18, 26:25, 47ff.
3. The chief priests delivered Jesus to Pilate, Matt 20:19, 27:1-2.
4. Pilate delivered Jesus to Herod. Luke 23:6-12.
5. Herod delivered Jesus back to Pilate. Luke 23:11.
6. Pilate delivered Jesus to the Roman soldiers, Matt 27:26, Mk 15:15
7. The Roman soldiers delivered Jesus to Calvary's cross, Matt 27:27ff.
8. God the Father delivered Jesus to die, Acts 2:23, Romans 8:32.
9. My sins delivered Jesus to suffer on the cross, 1 Cor 15:3ff.
10. Jesus delivered up His Spirit to God the Father, Luke 23:46.

B. To what was Jesus delivered? 1. Jesus, the Creator of the Universe, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16, was delivered like a common criminal, to suffer the public shame and agony of execution or capital punishment on the cross. The cross was a Roman Gentile punishment, not an Israelite Jewish punishment.

Jesus was delivered openly, publicly. His arrest, Luke 22:43-54, and trial, Luke 22:63-66, 23:13, and death by crucifixion, Luke 23:33-35, were all public. Paul describes it this way. *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."* Romans 3:25. *Set forth* refers to the public aspect of the crucifixion. And again Paul says: *"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."* Colossians 2:15. 2. Jesus was delivered to suffer the justice of God by publicly bearing the unsheathed wrath of God against all our sins.

C. Why was Jesus delivered? Jesus was delivered to the justice of God to appease the wrath of God. Let's state it clearly. He *"was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* Romans 4:25. *"Him, (Jesus) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"* Acts 2:23. Jesus dying on

Calvary was God's plan all along, to remedy the sin problem of the human race so that we would have a way to get saved and be right with God.

D. What happened when Jesus was delivered? Jesus was delivered to the justice of God, as God's passover lamb. It isn't explicitly stated in Romans 4:25 but Jesus was delivered to die for our offences, our crimes, our sins, our transgressions, our guilt - *who was delivered for*, meaning, because of, *our offences*. Jesus was God's passover lamb, Exodus 12:21, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Revelation 13:8 and the blood of the passover lamb had to be shed. The passover lamb always died.

The passover lamb always had to be without blemish or spot, a perfect specimen, yet the lamb wasn't admired for the perfection of its beauty. It was killed for a blood sacrifice. For Jesus, the cost of being God's passover lamb and bearing our sins was the death penalty and the shedding of His innocent blood. Salvation is free for us but it isn't cheap. It cost the Son of God His life. Modern Christians think of the cross as a piece of jewelry but in the first century AD, the cross was an instrument of capital punishment.

E. Delivered also conveys the sense of betrayal and condemnation. Delivered conveys the idea of surrender as well as to be betrayed and delivered to one's fate, to deliver up to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death. In modern terms it would signify being delivered to the death chamber or the gas chamber or the electric chair. The Greek word for *delivered* is *paradidōmi*. It is the same Greek word Paul used three times to describe idolaters in Romans 1:24, 26, 28, when he says: *God gave them up, God gave them up, God gave them over*. Giving them up is the same as delivering them up to their punishment or what they deserve. God gave Jesus up to be punished in our place, as our substitute.

Imagine that! God gave up or delivered up His Son to die on Calvary, to rescue poor lost sinners like you and me and the people in Romans 1. God imposed upon His own Son the punishment He imposed upon idolatrous sinners in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. Idolatrous sinners need not suffer the wrath of God against their sins because God has already imposed the death penalty of their sin upon His own beloved Son. Through Calvary's cross, God is reconciled unto the world and offers peace, pardon and salvation, only through His Son, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

How does that understanding of the Greek word paradidomi change the way you think about Romans 1:24, 26, 28? _____

Calvary was not a sadistic plan that God the Father imposed upon God the Son against the will of the Son. Nor was Calvary a social experiment gone wrong or a plan that started well and went off the rails. Calvary was an intentional collaborative event involving the wisdom, will, planning and acquiescence of the entire Godhead. Calvary was for you and for me so that we could be right with God and spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Romans 8:32 says: *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*

Galatians 2:20 - *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Ephesians 5:2 - *“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”*

1. Who delivered up Jesus to Calvary, Romans 8:32? _____
2. Who gave Himself for me, Galatians 2:20? _____
3. Does the Bible contradict itself when it asserts that Romans 8:32 and Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 5:2 are all true? _____

delivered for our offences - Jesus was delivered for our offences so that He could atone for them. That seems so simple and yet many Christians miss it entirely. The only way God could forgive our sins and save us from eternity in hell is for Jesus to die on the cross for our offences. That’s why Jesus is the only way to heaven, John 14:6, Acts 4:12. The proper view is the personal view. On Calvary, Jesus suffered the wrath of God for your offences, your crimes, your foolishness, your sins, your wickedness. On Calvary, God the Father poured out His wrath upon Jesus as if He was punishing you. On that old rugged cross, God the Son endured His Father’s wrath to pay for your sins.

and was raised again - When I was a teenager growing up in Baptist churches, preachers often used phrases like, “our completed salvation” or “the completed work of Christ on the cross.” By that they meant that Jesus dying on the cross was the end of everything necessary for our salvation yet God’s plan wasn’t

completed until the resurrection of Christ. The Calvary event wasn't over until three days later when Jesus rose from the dead, victorious over sin, death and hell, victorious over *principalities and powers* of darkness. Speaking of those principalities and powers and Jesus on the cross, Paul tells us:

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:15

The physical bodily resurrection of Christ is God's absolute assurance that Jesus did fully and completely appease God's wrath by the sacrifice of Himself. The physical bodily resurrection of Christ is God's glorious guarantee of our future resurrection. Calvary and the resurrection of Christ are God's testimony to the world that He *“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”* 1 Timothy 2:4. Don't miss God's reasoning on this because it is God *“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”* 1 Timothy 2:6. The reason God wants all men to be saved is because He gave Himself a ransom for all. That doesn't mean “all the elect.” That means all who believe.

was raised again for our justification. - The cross of Calvary and the bodily resurrection of Christ are for our justification. Our justification was accomplished by Jesus appeasing God's wrath by the sacrifice of Himself for our sins. Two historic mornings tell the tale of our redemption. The saddest and gladdest mornings this fallen race of sin-sick men ever experienced were separated by three days of tumult and turmoil.

On that first sad morning, Jesus the Lord of Glory was crucified in public before a jeering crowd. On that second glad morning, three days later, the garden tomb was empty, the Savior had risen from the dead and the universe had changed irrevocably so that nothing would ever be the same again. The propitiation of God's wrath on Calvary is about our justification. The resurrection of Christ is about our justification. The gospel of Christ is all about God's satisfaction and our justification.

*“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:
by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;
for he shall bear their iniquities.” Isaiah 53:11*

If nothing happened on Calvary which appeased and placated the righteous wrath of our holy God, then nothing in the Bible makes sense. The Bible is not about pious pleas to do your best or be sincerely spiritual or continue doing good

works or act all religious and that will get you to heaven. You don't need robes and rosaries and relics. Paul is crystal clear in Romans. We are sinners and our justification depends only upon Jesus appeasing the wrath of God against our sins and then rising from the dead to indicate that God's wrath was appeased and God did accept the payment Jesus made for our sins Do you believe Jesus appeased God's wrath and rose from the dead? _____

Our justification would be impossible even for God, without the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:17. Without the resurrection of Christ, we have no guarantee that God accepted the payment Jesus made for our sins. The bodily resurrection of Christ is God's glorious guarantee that Jesus is our Redeemer and His shed blood did: **1.** appease the wrath of God and, **2.** satisfy the justice of God and **3.** reconcile us to God, 2 Corinthians 5:19. If Christ had not resurrected, two sad inferences would naturally follow.

1. Jesus was not who He claimed to be and who the scriptures claim Him to be, God in the flesh, John 10:30, 1 Timothy 3:16. Instead, He was just an ordinary man with no saving power in His death and no efficacy in His sacrifice.

2. God the Father did not accept the sacrifice Jesus made on Calvary if He didn't rise from the dead. A dead Savior still in the grave is no Savior at all.

Acts 17:31 and Romans 10:9-10 - What does the resurrection of Christ mean for the human race? Your belief, your faith, your trust has to be in the right thing. Who is the object of your faith? If Mohamed is the object of your faith and you're trusting what he said, you're headed for a devil's hell. If Buddha is the object of your faith and you're trusting what he said, you're as good as in hell with the gates locked. Fill in any religion or the name of any religious leader. Jesus is the only way to God, the only way to salvation, the only way to heaven, John 14:6.

Conclusion: To deny that, on the cross, Christ propitiated (appeased) the wrath of God against our sins and to deny His victorious physical bodily resurrection from the dead so that we can be saved by faith alone, without works, is to deny the glorious gospel of Christ. God intends you to believe the gospel so that you can be saved, Romans 1:16. No one can deny the biblical gospel and legitimately claim to be a follower of Jesus.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
Romans 1:16

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and
thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:31*

Review Questions For Romans 4

1. Is the resurrection an important part of the gospel? _____
2. If Jesus had not resurrected, could we still be saved? _____
3. Abraham was the father of: a. Jews, b. Gentiles, c. Baptists, d. Catholics
4. Abraham was born into a wealthy aristocratic Jewish family. True or False
5. Abraham worked hard and earned his salvation at age 75. True or False
6. Abraham started life as a idolatrous pagan Gentile. True or False
7. Abraham is Paul's example of a man saved by faith alone. True or False
8. In Romans 4:3, which came first: believing God or being counted righteous?
9. In Romans 4:3, did God count Abraham righteous before he believed? _____
10. Biblically, if someone says you've got to be counted righteous before you can believe in Jesus, is he right or wrong? _____
11. Did Abraham have to get saved before he believed or did believing result in him getting saved? _____
12. In Romans 4:5, who does God justify - the godly or the ungodly? _____
13. Does God ever justify good, godly, religious people? _____
14. Who are the circumcision? Gentiles - Jews
15. Who are the uncircumcision? Jews - Gentiles
16. Is Abraham the father of the Gentiles? Yes - No
17. Is Abraham the father of the Jews? Yes - No
18. Is the Abrahamic Covenant with the physical seed of Abraham or with the spiritual seed of Abraham? _____
19. Is the Abrahamic Covenant with the physical descendants of Abraham through Ishmael or through Isaac? _____
20. Which does Mount Sinai represent? OT law or NT grace
21. Which does Mount Calvary represent? OT law or NT grace
22. Justification always comes from: Mount Sinai - Mount Calvary
23. Sanctification always comes from: Mount Sinai - Mount Calvary
24. Was Abraham becoming a father a miracle or a normal event? _____
25. Was Sarah becoming a mother a miracle or a normal event? _____
26. What one thing made all the difference for Abraham?
 - a. He worked really hard
 - b. He prayed all the time
 - c. He was very religious
 - d. He believed God
27. In Romans 4:22, Abraham believed God and therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness. Would God have imputed righteousness to Abraham if he did not believe God? _____

28. Should we teach that God will give people His righteousness even if they do not believe God? _____
29. If someone teaches that God gives people His righteousness before they believe, are they teaching what the Bible says? _____
30. In Romans 4:23-24, does God expect us to learn about the order of salvation from the example of Abraham? _____
31. What is the order of salvation in Romans chapter 4? **a.** Get saved first, then believe or **b.** Believe first and as a result of your belief, God saves you
32. In Romans 4:25, how important is Christ's resurrection for our justification?
a. Not very important, **b.** Kind of important, **c.** Vitally important. If Jesus didn't resurrect, we cannot be justified.
33. Did God save Abraham because of his works or his faith? _____
34. Did God save you because of your works or your faith? _____
35. Can people get saved by works instead of by faith? _____
36. Did Jesus, by dying on the cross, appease the wrath of God against all our sins? _____
37. Was Jesus, dying on the cross, just an example of obedience instead of appeasing God's wrath against sin? _____
38. Is God's wrath against your sins appeased by the death of Jesus on Calvary's cross? _____
39. How does God's wrath against sin, appeased on Calvary, help poor lost sinners today? _____
40. Should I tell people what a great thing Jesus did for them on Calvary? _____
41. What are the most interesting things you learned in Romans 4? _____

42. What are the most important things you learned in Romans 4? _____

43. What verses do you struggle to understand in Romans 4? _____
