

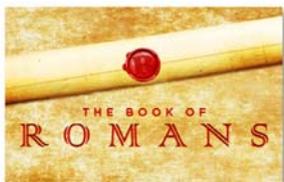
We're in a series called HEALER. Here's what we're trying to answer: How God heals this mess that we find ourselves in today. Anyone get that one? And here's what the answer is going to be: It won't come as a surprise, but we gotta somehow figure out how to get it inside of us and that's Jesus. That's how He heals the mess that we find ourselves in.

[Opening Prayer]

*So Jesus,*

*We invite You into this place this morning. We invite You into our presence and we would ask that your Holy Spirit would help make incredibly complicated eternal truths become understandable to each of us where we're at today. I pray that You would take away all the distractions and all those things vying for our attention that for these couple moments we'd be able to hear from your eternal Book, your eternal Word, that You have given to us.*

*It's in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.*



All right. We're in the book of Romans. If you have your Bibles, we're a people of The Book, we're Bible people here because we just know that's where truth is found. Romans chapters 1 & 2 are two chapters where the Apostle Paul sits down to pen a letter to the church in Rome. And as he sits down to write to them he recognizes that these are a group of people that feel very separated and very far away from God. And before he can help them understand how to come back to God, how to be healed by God, he has to help them understand how far away they are from God. And he says to them, "I wish I could just come to you and talk to you personally."

I was thinking about that this week, how blessed we are to be able to get together. But instead he's not able to do that. He's heard about this church, he loves what he hears about what's going on in that, instead he sits down to write them a letter and in his explanation he says, "Hey listen, you need to understand how far you are from God." And he starts out by explaining that the heathen is far from God, and we get that. These people that have long ago said, "No, God, I don't want to know anything with You. I want You out of my world. I want You out of my existence." And every time something comes up that looks like it might change the tide of that, they like raise that higher and they say no to God. The people listening on say, "I get that; the heathen, they're not going to respond to God." And at the end of that talk he says, "Hey listen, they're guilty, they're guilty before God." They're going, "Great."



Then he surprises them. He says, "Let me talk to you about another whole group of people. This is a group of people that would call themselves "moral." They keep all the rules and they would say if asked, basically, I'm better than this group of people, than this group of people, than this group of people. As long as I'm better than *that* person, I am fine, and I follow all these rules." And he says to them, "Hey listen, yeah, those moral people, they, too, they are guilty." And they're like, "Okay. Well, that's cool. We're all here. We're religious people. Everything is fine." And then he really catches them off guard and by surprise and he says, "No. Actually, the religious people, they are also guilty before God." And there is this response, you can almost hear it, you can sense that as Paul's writing it he can hear what they're saying when they get to this part of the letter that he's writing to them. It's sort of like, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! You just went too far. You can't say that."



So as he enters into chapter 3 of Romans—and you all know that when he wrote this at the beginning there weren't chapter designations or verse designations—as he enters into this next part it was all meant

to be read together, that's why you need to be reading from the beginning of this and read ahead, don't just wait for me to read the next couple of verses to you. He speaks to them, a group of people that have been convicted as guilty who are now saying, "Well, if we're so guilty, how do we get made right with God?" And isn't that the question that most of us want to know? And even if you get to the heart of most of the people you're around, there is this feeling like *I want to get to God. I want to be made right with God.* And so in chapter 3 he goes through a list of words that are religious, church-sounding words that oftentimes we don't really remember what the meanings are. And I'm gonna just go through that really fast because I want you to remember the meanings of these words.

The one word is the *righteousness of God*, I guess that's three words, but when he talks about the righteousness of God he is talking about a people that are right with God a people that are forgiven by God and a people that are placed into the family. He says I want you to have the righteousness of God. And he uses this other word *grace*. We see it on signs, oftentimes we see it painted on walls, but do we really understand what it means? It means God's unmerited favor. In light of the fact that we are guilty, regardless of where we're at, how we're behaving, what's been going on in our life, God loves us so much that He pours His grace out on us.

And he uses the word *redemption*. It was a picture in that time of the slaves who would from time to time be placed back onto the market in an auction and they'd be auctioned off. But there was a way in which they could be redeemed, where someone actually could pay an awful lot of money and by paying that amount of money, by paying that fee, that slave would no longer be sold as a slave again but they would be free once and for all to be able to walk away as a free person. And he says that's what happened to us when we were redeemed, that Jesus paid the price to redeem us so that we no longer had to live as a slave to sin but that we walk away as a free person. In fact, he describes that as *propitiation*, which is one of these big religious words that's hard to remember and understand what it means, but it basically means this: That the blood of Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary satisfies God's righteous demands, what God says hey, because of sin this is what has to be paid. He says a perfect lamb, a perfect one has to die and shed his blood so that God's moral response to sin could be satisfied.

And then just one more word and this word we'll repeat a couple times today and I'll continue to repeat the definition and I would just encourage you to get in your head, it's the word *justify* or *justification*. And basically the word justification is God's legal declaration that that sinner, the guilty one, all of us, is declared righteous—right with God, forgiven, and in His family, legally declared righteous.

### WORDS TO REMEMBER

Righteousness of God - People that are right with God, forgiven by God, and placed into the family of God

Grace - God's unmerited favor

Redemption - freed from slavery to sin

Propitiation - to satisfy God's wrath

Justify / Justification - God's legal declaration that the sinner is right with God, forgiven, and in His family - legally declared righteous

In verse 21 of chapter 3 it started out with two little words. After having been told they're guilty, guilty, guilty, it says, "But now" — *but now* you are righteous, *but now* you have received the grace of God, *but now* you have been redeemed from the slave market of sin, *but now* the propitiation on the cross of the blood has satisfied God's righteous judgment of sin, *but now* you are justified, you are declared legally right with God, forgiven, and in his Family. You would think that that would be enough. We're gonna all stand up and go, "Wow! It's all God, none of me, all what He did for me. I failed, I came up short, I was guilty, and then He did and He did and He did again and in so doing He gives me His righteousness – Yes!" Evidently, Paul as he's writing this recognizes what you and I have experienced all through our lives that we would say, "Great... but I still need to do something." Free gifts are really, really, really hard to receive. Someone else doing something where we don't have to give back or trade like we do at Christmastime with gifts is really difficult for us. And so we might accept this gift and then we turn around and say, "But there's a whole bunch of stuff that we have to do to get it."

These people reading this he knew still, by chapter 4, did not get it. In fact, I think he might realize that they would look at this Book and say, "Wait a minute. It's full of a bunch of rules. There's all sorts of stuff that I have to do. There's all sorts of things I have to do to be made right with God, to keep God happy." And he goes, "We just talked about this—*it doesn't have anything to do with you.*" The prevailing religious thought was if you want to get to God, here's what you gotta do. And that prevailing religious thought is still the case today—still—here's the things I'm going to do. You look at any religion, any world religion, here are the things that you have to do, and if you do them you'll get to God.

And so Paul says here's what I'm gonna do now, I'm gonna bring you an illustration. And I'm gonna bring you an illustration by reminding you of a person that you talk about all the time—they still do to this day. I'm gonna bring you a guy from your history that you look at as a hero you look up to and that's a guy by the name of Abraham. In fact, he won't just stop with Abraham, he's gonna bring up another guy by the name of David. David was their favorite king and you remember how David failed and yet God showed him grace and mercy. And what he's going to say is he's gonna say look at these two guys and look how God responds to them and you're going to get some understanding in your own life. And here's the understanding that you're going to get.

Now I've been mentioning it this week wherever I'm at there are two things that I believe everyone who has ever lived needs to know, everyone that's alive today needs to know, everyone that follows us needs to know, and it is this: It has never been about works. You want to get right with God, you want to come to God, it's never been about what I do. I can never do enough. It's not going to work. It's never been about works. And here's what we're gonna say today in these two guys, Abraham and David are used as an example to explain this in Romans by Paul, it has always been about faith. It's always been about faith—believe what God says and do what God says. When God says it you do it, you respond in faith. It doesn't make sense, you don't have the full story. And you talk about two guys that didn't have the full picture—Abraham and David, nope, no full understanding of what was going on.<sup>1</sup> The book of

**It has never been about  
works  
It has always been about  
faith**  
Romans 4

<sup>1</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ~ HEBREWS 11:8

Hebrews even says Abraham, he even dies and he doesn't fully grasp it or understand it but God said it so here we go. So we continue on. If you have your Bibles, Romans chapter 4, verse 1:

<sup>1</sup> *What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?*

<sup>2</sup> *for if Abraham was justified by works*

~ ROMANS 4:1-2a

Understand what that's trying to say, that word *justified* meant “to be legally declared righteous.” If he got where he got by doing a bunch of stuff, this is his argument here, he has something to boast about. Remember in the chapter before when he went through all those words—righteousness and justification, redemption, he said in verse 27:

<sup>27</sup> *Then what becomes of our boasting?*

~ ROMANS 3:27a

In other words, you just can't— when you realize that all of this was done by God for us and what he continues to do for us, I can't say, “Look what I've done.” And he says look at Abraham, verse 2:

<sup>2</sup> *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about,*

— but he says —

*but not before God.*

~ ROMANS 4:2

In other words, God's not having it. God's not impressed by our works. There's only one work and it was the work at Calvary when Jesus shed the blood of Calvary as a propitiation. That word propitiation means “to satisfy God's wrath.” To satisfy the judgment that should have come upon us, He placed it on Jesus and it was satisfied there.

So in other words, if you think your works are getting it done, God's not impressed, God's not moved. Verse 3:

<sup>3</sup> *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”<sup>2</sup>*

Verse 4 says:

<sup>4</sup> *Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.*

~ ROMANS 4:3-4

In other words, you go to work this week and you get a paycheck that's what's due you for all that you've done. He says that's not what's going on here. What we talk about every time we talk about grace, when we talk about salvation, when we talk about getting to God, it never has anything to do with works. It has everything to do with grace and his explanation is a guy by the name of Abraham. The best way to sort of get a grasp of—Okay, so why Abraham? What's going on?—is to understand what the people he's writing this letter to understand, and we can find all about what they understood back in the book of Genesis. Genesis chapter 12 starting in verse 12 going up through chapter 25, if you want to at the end of the message today, over the next week read over this, it's fabulous and it'll explain a lot of what I'm going to try to say here really, really quickly.

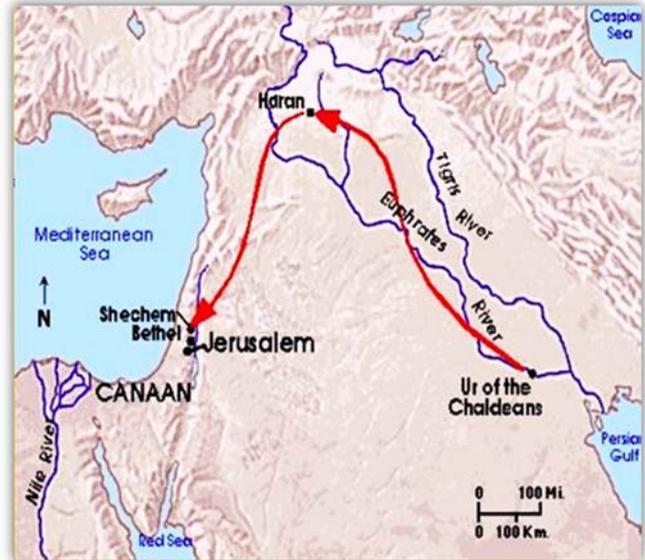
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<sup>2</sup> Cross references: (1) *And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.* ~ GENESIS 15:6  
(2) *just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?* ~ GALATIANS 3:6

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In the first bunch of chapters in Genesis leading up to the chapter 12 talks about the creation of the world and all these beginning things that are going on, the fall of mankind, and we get to chapter 12 and all of a sudden a guy by the name of Abram shows up. Later on his name would be changed to Abraham, but the name Abram means “great father.” When we meet him he's 75 years old and he has no children, but his name means great father. Can you imagine, “Hi, I'm great father.” “Oh, tell me about your kids.” “Uh, I don't have any.” “Nice name.” “Yeah, I know. I hear that all the time.”

Seventy-five years old and God comes to this guy and he speaks to him, but before I tell you what God says to him, before we read it from chapter 12, the thing that we need to recognize here is that this guy is from Ur, and Ur was in Babylon, outside of Babylon. It was a place where the people were idolaters. They followed satanic practices and satanic rituals, so understand this, for the first 75 years of his life that's all he knew and God picks him out of *that* situation and he says to him, “Hey Abraham, I want you”—in fact, I'm gonna turn to Genesis chapter 12 to read just these first couple of words to you. Chapter 12, verse 1:



Abram's (Abraham's) Journey

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

— in other words, you've always been comfortable here you, you've built a name for yourself here, you have history here, you love it here, you know this place. I want you to get up and I want you to leave. This is God coming to him and saying that. And he says if you do this, here's my promises to you:

<sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation,

— that means he's going to have children —

and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

— and the next verse simply says this —

<sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

#### ~ GENESIS 12:1-4

And the thing that I read when I see that there is just that Abraham says yes to God. There comes a place where we have to stop and we have to say yes to God. That's this act of faith. This is what it's always going to be where we go *I don't fully understand it; it doesn't fully make sense to me, but God has said it and I'm responding to it.* That's why we're always talking from this Book, the Bible here, because when we do so we know that this Book over and over and over has been proven to be true. And God's words are in here. If it's not this, then what is it? Stuff that I make up? Stories that I come up with? And so we keep on going back to this Book and when this Book tells us something we follow it and we do it. And so in Genesis chapter 12 Abraham goes, he does what God told him to do.

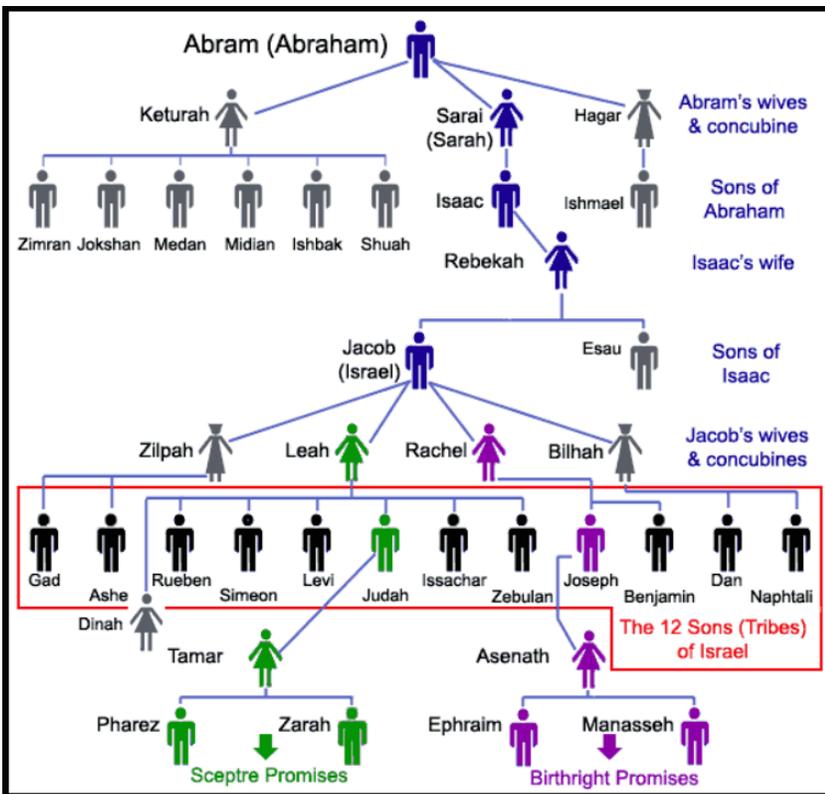
In [Genesis] chapter 15, verse 6, it tells us that Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteous. Here's why this is important. Do you remember Paul when he was writing to us here a moment ago in [Romans] chapter 4, he says, "So talk to me a minute. Um, what made Abraham righteous?" And he's referring back to this [Genesis] because you know what did. He's referring back to this story that they had told to themselves and told to each other over and over and over again, chapter 15, verse 6, says that he believed the Lord and God counted it as righteousness.

*<sup>6</sup> And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

~ GENESIS 15:6

In other words, back to the word [righteousness] meaning again—in right relationship with God, forgiven, and placed into the family of God. So these promises come and he hears I'm going to have a child, my name great father Abraham is gonna mean something one of these days, and the years go by and no child. And I'm gonna try to blow through this very fast but you've got to hear this: He decides no children, God wants me have children, God's made this promise, his wife comes up with this idea, *Hey, we'll take our servant girl, you can have a child with her and then God will get what he wanted.* In other words, I think we can make it work for God. I think we can figure this out for God. I think we can make God look good in this, and then God will get what He said he was going to give us. Now how many times are we in that same mode? It's like *I think that's God, I see God in that.* No, He's not, you just sort of like created that, you made that happen, you manufactured that. There was no God in that. God had promised it to him, but that was not doing it God's way.

As a result a son is born from that relationship, his name is Ishmael and if you get a chance you really ought to look at chapter 16, verse 12.<sup>3</sup> It talks about this child being born, he says he's going to be "a wild donkey of a man." Anyone know anyone like that? And it says he's going to have "his hand against everyone," that's what Scripture says in [Genesis] 16:12 for Ishmael—and that is the man that the Arab religions traced their religious background and heritage to. He was not the son of promise, he was actually the son of disobedience of Abraham's disobedience to God. And even though he had said yes to God, he tries to make it work for God, and what comes out of that turns out to be the thing that the religion of Islam comes from, and Arab religions come from later on.



But – a God of grace who would take a guy, why Abraham from Ur, 75 years of living in just far away from God, why him? Well, because remember, he established this right

<sup>3</sup> *You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.* ~ GENESIS 16:11b-12

from the start that we're all guilty so he wasn't any better or any worse than any of us find ourselves even today, and God so chooses us and we just go, "God, thank you for choosing us." I mean, I don't understand a lot of this, but I say it constantly, "God, why do I get the opportunity to have this Book in front of me? To be able to study it, to be able to listen to as much stuff as I do, to talk to so many people that have thoughts about the Word of God. Why am *I* so blessed with it?" I just step back and I go *Man, I'm held more accountable.* And I just go, "Wow, God, thank you so much for doing that for me."

And at age 100 God fulfills His promise to Abraham and gives him a son. His son's name is Isaac, and now I'm gonna put this in way fast-forward right now. Isaac eventually has a son by the name of Jacob. Jacob has sons and one of those sons is a guy by the name of Joseph. His brothers are very unhappy with him, jealous of him, and they sell him into slavery. He ends up in Egypt, works his way up through the ranks in Egypt. There's a famine in the land and Jacob's sons, Joseph's brothers, end up coming there and they end in Egypt as a family where they spend the next 430 years under hard labor and difficult conditions.

But because of the nature of the relationship between the Egyptians and what started out as a small family, that becomes a great group of people of about 2.4 million people. The purity of their family, of their generation, is not mixed, they do not intermarry, and as a result of that they remain pure. And at the end of that time, after about after about 430 years, 2.4 million people, God allows a man by the name of Moses to go to Pharaoh and say, "Let my people go." And they head out into the desert, across the Red Sea, and they wander in the wilderness for forty years. That would be the group of people that would become the Jewish people whom the Messiah would come through, God's chosen people. And so you just start to see how these people actually trace back their heritage, their very DNA to this guy by the name of Abraham who said yes to God.



Chapter 4, verse 3 of Romans again, I just want to read it to you:

<sup>3</sup> *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

~ ROMANS 4:3

Chapter 4, verse 10:

<sup>10</sup> *How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?*

~ ROMANS 4:10a

Now here's the question that the Apostle Paul is trying to chase down with the people: Is my right relationship with God because of works that I do? And he said, right away he said no, it's not because of works. Remember again, they're still not sure. So he says fine, let's go back to how this all began. Let's go back to your ancient relative Abraham. Everything Abraham did was right in their eyes, they just think the world of him; he's a giant of the faith. He says let's just go back to them, remember it said he was counted righteous by God? Here's the question he asks: When was that? When was he counted righteous? Was it when he believed or was it when he works? Now he'll go through an explanation here. He says in the middle of verse 10, "*Was it before or after he had been circumcised?*"

Again, throughout these texts, if you're reading it it may be one of those things where you just go, "I don't even know how this is relevant, because I just keep on seeing circumcision." Although I notice

one of the presidential candidates is talking about it, so it's just weird how this stuff does remain relevant, you know, how can that be? But the reality is for most of us the word circumcision is like why do we even have to talk about that in the first place? Once Abraham believed then God says here's going to be the seal, the sign of this covenant between me and you, and circumcision comes in.<sup>4</sup>

It would still be another 400 years until the Ten Commandments came to him, and here's what we learn that is absolutely amazing. You'll remember a few moments ago I told you in chapter 15, verse 6, it told us that Abraham believed God—and that believing in God is really the definition of faith. Abraham believed God, he had faith in God, “Okay, God, yes, here we go,” and it was counted to him as

*Faith*

righteousness. In Genesis chapter 15 he believed God. In Genesis chapter 17 he was circumcised. In Romans 4 he's asking the question: Was he circumcised before or after he believed? What do you think? You're afraid you're gonna get it wrong. He was circumcised *after* he believed. You see it was when he believed that God counted him as righteous. That was right at the time that he

was still in Ur. That was right at the time that he was still a Satan worshipper, but God comes to him and he goes, “I'm in. I believe. Yes, God.” And he wants everyone listening on, all of the people then who had become very much enamored by this outward sign of their faith, a circumcision. He says it's not about those outward symbols, it's not about those outward signs of the covenant, it's about when you said yes to God; when you believed and acted upon what He said when you had faith—because it was never about works, it's always been about faith.<sup>5</sup> And that's the message that we have to have before us.

Here's what we know, people are constantly asking for advice, people are constantly asking for a set of three things. You know, really, if you read most of the articles on the Internet that draw your attention: Three Things To Clean The Soap Scum Off Your Bathtub. You're like click, click, I gotta see and figure that out. You read it, you don't do anything about it, but you learned what those three things are. Three Ways To Have A Better Marriage. Four Ways To Make Your Money Last Further Into Retirement. And what happens? Even in our spiritual quest, Two Ways To Make God Happier With You. Ways that we are constantly looking for a set of works and a plan to bring us close to God—because isn't that the American way? I will work, I will do what it takes. So if I have to show up here on Sunday morning, tell me how I have to do it this week to get closer to God. If I read a little bit longer, if I pray a little bit longer, if I say it a little bit louder, if I play a little more Christian music in my house, if I give a little bit more money, whatever it is to get closer to God, I'm in. And the Apostle Paul says listen, our problem is not following a set more of rules—we need Jesus.



And that sets up the story that this time of the year so puts into central focus. That's why I say to you just invite your friends to Easter because the Gospel message is what is compelling. The Gospel message is what changes lives. The Gospel message is what heals the mess we're in. And just like Abraham you go, “How is that that Jesus dying on the cross, satisfying God's wrath, forgiving us of our sins, and being buried and rising from the dead some 2,000 years ago, how does that heal us today?” That's what God says and here's what I know: When we live by that, when we say yes to that, sort of

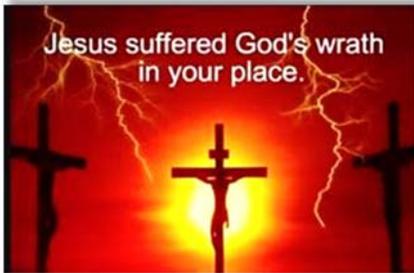
<sup>4</sup> *This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*  
~ **GENESIS 17:10-11**

<sup>5</sup> *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written,*

*“Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,  
And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” ~ ROMANS 9:30-33 (NASB)*

like God coming to Abraham in Ur going, “Hey, pick up your tent. You're leaving this place you've always lived, now go on.” He goes, “Yes, God, I'm in.” And God says, “Counted to you as righteous.” It didn't make sense to him even in his lifetime. It didn't fully make sense but he knew that was God.

We know that this [*holds up his Bible*] is God and we know that from the very beginning of time there was this urgency and this longing among God's people: Come and make right this hole inside of us; come make right this separation that we have from You. They'd go do this sacrifice every year but it wasn't enough, they had to come back the next year with a perfect lamb. Blood had to be shed but they were longing for the day that *the* perfect lamb would come. And they didn't fully grasp it, they didn't fully understand it, but it would be Messiah. It would be Jesus who God would send to this earth to live a perfect life, and then He would go to the cross to be sacrificed there and take on all of the sins of not only us but all of mankind on Himself to satisfy God's wrath. Again, mind-blowing, doesn't make sense, why does it have to be that way? I don't know, but by faith I say yes to God. And that is what I'm so passionate about.



And that is what Paul is doing in chapter 4. It's a turning point. He goes look back to this hero, it's how it worked then. You think, “Well, things were different in the Old Testament. How things worked there, it was just like totally different, things all changed in the New Testament.” And Paul says, no, He didn't. Abraham was saved by faith. God made him righteous and justified him, legally declared him as righteous *by faith* in the Old Testament, and He'll do the exact same thing for you today. The essence of Christianity is you coming to God *by faith* in Jesus alone. This separation that you feel that is the mess that you find yourself in causes us the need to respond today in faith. And I'm gonna invite you in just a moment to respond by faith.

And you gotta come back next week. Next week is Palm Sunday, you gotta come back next week because we're going to talk about What Is Saving Faith? Crazy thing on Palm Sunday, they're lining the streets on the way to Jerusalem yelling out, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” to Jesus—and then they crucify Him. And today we come to this place where we have to say, “I have to figure out what it means to say yes to Jesus, to put my faith in Him, to put the weight of myself on Him.”

I put my faith in a lot of things in this world. You have your faith in the financial system. You have the faith in the credit card in your wallet that it will buy you lunch today. You had faith when you sat down on that seat today that it would hold you up. You have faith that many things are going to happen; that the sun is gonna come up, the sun's gonna set, that there's going to be a house still standing when you get there. And the reality is all that stuff eventually is going to fail you and eternity is at hand. And the thing that we want more than anything for you is that you know that you have right relationship with God. That you know for certain today that you are not separated from God. That when God says to you believe in Me, that's what Paul says at the beginning of chapter 4, he says I'm going to use these guys that you looked up to to explain this to you. Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteous. And the Scripture all throughout says believe in Jesus and you will never be disappointed.<sup>6</sup> Doesn't make sense yet today, the full picture isn't clearly there, but you're gonna say yes, Jesus, I believe in You.

<sup>6</sup> For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” ~ **ROMANS 10:11**. Quote cross references to Isaiah 28:16: *Because of these things, this is what the Lord God says: “I will put a stone in the ground in Jerusalem, a tested stone. Everything will be built on this important and precious rock. Anyone who trusts in it will never be disappointed.” ~ ISAIAH 28:16 (NCV)*

So I'm gonna invite you to do that. I'm just gonna say right now is there anyone in here right now that says, "Yes, Jesus, I want to believe in You"? I mean, it's one of those things we shout out and go yes. Yes? Yes? So let's just bow our heads and if there's some of you in this room right now that have never said yes to Jesus, there was something that was awesome right now just about verbalizing it, saying it out loud.

And some of you have never said it, it's the first time to God: God, I am a sinner. I agree that I'm guilty, but also today know that You said believe in my Son Jesus who hung and died on that cross to forgive me of my sins. Lord Jesus, I don't get it all I don't fully understand all the implications of it, but something in me is telling me this is right and I say yes to You just today. Today I believe in your Son Jesus Christ who gave His life so I can have life.

And the Word of God says that you'll never be the same again, the old things are passed away, all things become new, there is a spiritual transaction taking place.<sup>7</sup> That's why he uses that word justification there, that he is legally declaring you as righteous before God. If you want to be in that spot of being justified, righteous before God, part of his family, forgiven just say, "Dear God, I want that right now," and I promise you He will not let you down. He will not leave you hanging. And He will come into your life; He'll change you and transform you. There's a little card in the seat in front of you that says SAY YES TO JESUS, grab that, take it with you, we'd love if you'd just write your name down on that and let us know that you prayed that prayer today to Jesus. I'd be thrilled if you'd tell someone—tell me, tell one of our pastors, but tell someone you're nearby because this is greatest news ever.



[Closing Prayer]

*Lord Jesus,*

*I pray for each person in this room that by faith is saying yes to You right now; some of you for the very first time. Lord God, I pray that You would just light them on fire. I pray You'll surround them with people that can explain the decision they made right now.*

*Lord God, I pray for those of us in this room that have not said yes to You for a long time. We made a step of faith years ago but we've been just doing it our way since then and we're okay because we thought we were a little bit better than the person next to us. But today we want to say: What do You want us to say yes to today? We want to follow You, Jesus. We want to love You. We want to live for You. We want to make a difference in this world for You. We love You, Jesus.*

*It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.*

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<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ~ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

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