***Justification by Faith

7LW-012***

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; "that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." Philippians 2:15-16

"But Jesus answered and said, 'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Matthew 4:4

This morning we continue studying the revelation of the Word of God on the 7 last words uttered by Christ on the cross. This is segment number 12 and the implications of his great words "It is finished." Specifically, what is finished is what we are focusing upon.

**Religion Falls Short**

As most of you probably know, the Hindus of India and the Muslims of Pakistan are currently threatening each other with nuclear weapons and sudden death. Both are acting, you should understand, on the basis of beliefs of divine guidance which they're receiving from their gods. The irony in all of this is that neither of these religious systems, Islam nor Hinduism, worships the creator God of the Bible, and certainly not the savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God without whom no one can come to God. There is no way, Jesus said, that you will come to My Father except through Him. These people may nuke each other. They may kill each other in one grand, magnificent display. Then the irony of it all is that they're all going to end up in Hades together. And they will spend eternity eventually in the Lake of Fire. They will sit there looking at one another, wondering why they were at each other's throats here on the Earth when the real problem was where they were going to be in eternity.

The god driving both the Hindus and Muslims is, in fact, Satan, the great deceiver, leading people into hell under the guise that he is God. He has always wanted to be a supreme being, and he is always worshiped as a supreme being by these religious groups. But the problem is that he is a bloody being, and from the first Jesus said this angel has not only been a liar, but he has been a murderer. Since then, the human race has created a great wall between the Holy Creator, God and sinful men. Therefore, all of the efforts of these religious groups and their false gods is to naught. They cannot come up with a system to get through the barrier wall between God and man.

**A Great Chasm (Wall) Between God and Man**

This was demonstrated under a different terminology in Luke 16:26, which records the incident of Lazarus and the rich man. When the rich man asked that Lazarus come over while they're both in Hades, they could look across and see one another. The rich man asked Abraham, Please send Lazarus over so he can put a drop of cool water on my tongue. This heat and this punishment is so unbearable, just that much relief would be a great deal, a great help to me. The wall separating saved from unsaved is very clear, certainly even in eternity itself. In this passage it is reflected for Abraham says you are both getting what you deserved in life. You are both getting now what you have deserved from your lifestyle; Lazarus in his faith in a coming savior, the rich man confident in himself. Then in verse 26, Abraham says, "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us." This is the barrier between God and man. It's called a great chasm in this particular passage.

**Only God Could Remove Barrier**

Sin in the human race has made it impossible for the unsaved person who is blind to this wall to find a way, trying on his own, to get to God. You cannot get to God no matter what you try. No matter how good you are, no matter what your efforts are, this wall cannot be breached. Only an act of God could remove this barrier separating the lost sinner from God. That's what has happened. It took the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross as the sinless Lamb of God to demolish this wall of separation block by block.

**Faith Alone in Christ Alone**

There is a series of 5 major blocks that constitute this wall and the death of Christ dealt with each one of them and removed them. Now the way to God and to eternal life in heaven is open, open by an act of faith on the sinner's part, faith alone in Jesus Christ alone as personal savior. If you add anything to faith, such as "I believe that I must trust in Jesus Christ as savior and be water baptized," you will end up in the Lake of Fire. There's all kinds of big denominations and people who faithfully trusted in Christ as Savior, they believed he had died for them, but they believe that they had to provide this one work of water regeneration, water baptism. Scripture says if it's grace, it's grace; if it's works, it's works. You cannot mix them! Add in one work and you will end up in the Lake of Fire.

Can you imagine how those people are going to feel? They sat in churches like this. They sang hymns. They passed the offering plate. They did all kinds of Christian service activities. Then all of a sudden, they close their eyes in death and instead of the angels swirling around them carrying them to Heaven, they find themselves in this horrible pit called Hades. Hades is a way station on the way to the Lake of Fire. They say, how could this happen? I'm a church member. I was a leader. Yes, but it was not by faith alone in Christ alone. So therefore, I can't give you salvation. I can only give it as a gift; if you add anything to it, it can't be a gift. This business of faith is God's way of dealing with humanity. If you do not understand that, you will go far astray. And most human beings have done just exactly that.

**A Review of the Blocks in the Wall**

So the act of Christ on a cross has taken apart this wall block by block. Blocks making up this wall, first of all, we had the block of the sin market. Everybody is born into the human race enslaved to Satan. There's no way you can break that slave enslavement. You are his slave. The only way to get out of that and remove that block was redemption. When Christ died in the cross, he paid the price. You have been redeemed.

The second block was your moral guilt. There is no way that you can handle, remove, your pile of guilt. It is there for sin. The result is that the death of Christ expiated all that. So by an act of expiation, God removed it. Expiation means it's canceled. Your moral guilt was canceled. That block is gone.

But there is the problem that we're all born spiritually dead. You can't go to Heaven if you're spiritually dead. Only spiritually alive people can go to Heaven and you cannot make yourself spiritually alive no matter how good you are. You died spiritually because you have an Old Sin Nature. You die physically because you are in Adam participating in his rebellion. So there you are. You're dead on both accounts. The result was: Christ came in, the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer, and you become spiritually alive.

And the fourth block, which we have been looking at currently, is the block of the holiness of God. How good do you have to be to go to Heaven? You have to be as good as Jesus Christ, and that means absolute perfection. You can't fool around with that. You can't pretend that it can be something less than that. The Bible is very clear. Your righteousness, your good deeds, are like filthy rags in God's sight, the best of them.

This block of divine holiness has 2 parts. First of all is the justice of God. The justice of God demands death for sin. Then it has the other part, which is absolute righteousness. You must be as perfect as God. So God's justice demands a payment of death for sin. That was met by Jesus Christ in our behalf. We call that propitiation. He satisfied the justice of God. Then God justifies the one who has accepted Christ as savior by crediting to that believer the absolute righteousness of God. Bingo, you're as good as Jesus Christ in the eyes of God. Not positionally, you are still a sinner now. But once you up there in His presence, you will be as perfect as He is. But on your credit, you are absolute righteousness.

**Abram Believes God**

So God has removed one block after another through Christ. This work of God is a grand expression of faith. Therein lies the problem. God works by faith, not by works, in dealing with human sin. One of the all-time great examples in Scripture is Abraham. Please turn to Romans 4. Abraham was the son of a man named Terah. Terah was a very rich man in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia. Ur was a great metropolitan center of heathen idol worship. It is in the area of the Tigris-Euphrates River. Abraham thus grew up as a prosperous kid, but one who is religious but ignorant of the true God. He certainly lacked absolute righteousness. He had religion, but he had no relationship to the true creator, God. Abraham spent seventy-five years of his life, first seventy-five years in that climate, in that context. The Bible doesn't tell us how God made himself known to Abraham. This seventy-five year old dude is a prosperous man of significance in the community. He lives in an idol infested city and knows what it is to live the good life. Suddenly, he is confronted with his sin, crushed by the realization of what awaits him in eternity. God says, "I'm going to bring a savior in the future. That savior will pay for your sins. It will cover your moral guilt. It will remove all the barriers between yourself and Me. If you believe My promise, you will be saved." Abraham believed that promise.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

In Genesis 12:1-3, we have what is referred to as the Abrahamic covenant. Everything that God is doing today in the world is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, which has never been fulfilled in full detail. Genesis 12:1, "Now the LORD said to Abram, [This was his name before God changed it to Abraham,] 'Go forth from your country, [Ur of the Chaldees in the Mesopotamian Valley,] and from your relatives, and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;'" Now, understand that Abraham now is a born again believer. This covenant comes after he has exercised faith in Christ. He is going to come into tremendous personal and eternal blessings, but not before he is saved. The promises come after faith has been exercised. Once salvation is explained, he rose to it and believed it. So please understand that God is speaking now to a man who has believed Him, and now God has imputed to his credit absolute righteousness. Abraham hasn't done anything yet. All he is, is a recipient of the grace of God.

**Salvation Is Always by Grace**

How are people saved before the era of the Mosaic Law, by works or by grace? By grace, no works. How are people saved during the era when the Mosaic Law was in effect, which it isn't today, by works or by grace? By grace! No one has ever been saved by works. Every Jew had to believe that there was a coming messiah savior. Those who believed it were saved. Those who did not were religious and performed all the rituals of the Mosaic Law and marched right into Hades. And they are on their way to the Lake of Fire now. So understand that Abraham is the great epitome of faith in the Bible.

This was important to Paul. He takes from the Old Testament experience of Abraham to try in the Book of Romans to explain to the Jews of his day: you're keeping those Mosaic Law rules, you're living by all those regulations and even the moral code you're living by, but you don't get to Heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments or saying the Lord's Prayer or Hail Marys or anything else. You only get saved by a gift from God because you trusted in the Savior who is good enough to have paid for your sins and carried your guilt. Now you can be given his absolute righteousness. So this promise, once you go forth from your country, leave your relatives, get out of your father's house, take a land which I'm going to show you. Abraham eventually got to that land. He did see that land, but he never owned it. The only part of the land he ever had was a cave that he bought for a burial site for his family. He was always looking forward to God's fulfillment and he is still looking forward to that. Come the millennium, it's going to be fulfilled.

Genesis 12:2, "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing." "So that you shall be a blessing," is a more accurate translation. Usually this little phrase gets translated wrong, like it's something future. It's a command! And you be a blessing! If you move out and obey me, accept what I'm telling you by faith. How do you accept things from the Scripture? By faith. You've decided the Bible is true, that it speaks for God. And you have every reason to believe that: there are no errors in it, it is unlike every religious book in the world. Therefore, by faith you listen and you believe, you trust this as the voice of God. Abraham having heard the voice of God, God said to him, I'll make you a great nation like the sands on the seashore, all the grains of sand on the seashore and all the stars in the heavens. I will bless you. I'll make your name great. That certainly has happened.

**The Hope of Glory**

You'll be a blessing, that's the next phrase. So you be a blessing. How can you be a blessing? Only by faith in the Word of God. None of us are going to be a blessing in summer camp or vacation bible school unless we have had faith, first of all, in the Word of God, and we're acting accordingly. When we act accordingly, then we can fulfill this commandment that we should be a blessing. Then God says, "I will bless those who bless you." To have blessed Abraham was to have blessed Abraham's God, the Creator. "And the one who curses you I will curse." To curse Abraham was to have cursed the God of Abraham.

There is a principal that still exists to this day. Peter says in one of his epistles, don't be disturbed if people jump on you and cause you suffering because you're a Christian, when they attack you, they are attacking Jesus Christ. When they bless you, they are blessing Jesus Christ. God is represented by us. Christ in us, the hope of glory is the scriptural term. He lives in us. The devil can no longer get at the Lord Jesus, He is now in Heaven at the Father's right hand.

**Attacking Believers Is Attacking God Himself**

So he has to attack Christ by attacking the church, His body of which you are part of. So he attacks us, brings suffering to us, and thus to degrade the Lord Jesus Christ. If you were here last Sunday for our Memorial Day celebration, you saw that video. And some of you were moved to tears when you saw: how great was the Reformation Christianity heritage of this nation and of all those intelligent, significant men who wrote the Constitution, and how in recent times that has been degenerated by vile and evil people who want Christianity to be snuffed out and who want freedom to wallow in the pigsty of sin. All that because of loss of faith in the Bible in this country. You lose faith, faith in God is not exercised through the Word of God, then those people who are attacking Christianity by attacking the believers, we who are called all kinds of names, they are attacking God Himself. They are on very dangerous ground.

**Abram's Obedience**

Then, into Genesis 12:3, "And in you [in you Abraham,] all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Paul, in Galatians, says that was fulfilled in the coming of the savior Jesus Christ.

So here's Abraham, seventy-five years old, he's told to have faith in a savior that God is someday going to bring and that He will bring Him through the line of the descendants of Abraham and that God is going to give them a great land. And He wants them to move out to follow that Fertile Crescent. You couldn't go across the Arabian Desert. You had to follow the waterline and make a crescent-shaped descent down toward the Mediterranean Sea, toward the land of Palestine. Abraham trusted God and he moved from Ur to Canaan. Genesis 12:4-5, "So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. "And Abram took Sarah his wife [who at the time was sixty-five] and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan."

If you look on a map, you'll see that Abraham proceeded. He came part of the way on the Fertile Crescent route. He came to a place called Heron. For some reason he stopped there. We suspect that it was Papa Terah who is the problem. It was a nice place. Let's just stay here. Let's not go any further. We've already improved. This is good. For some reason, the son was influenced to stay there. They stayed there for a number of years. God prospered them. They accumulated all kinds of people probably that were converted to Abram's God, to Abraham's preachings. But finally, when Terah died, they packed up and they left Heron. And they went down the rest of the way and actually came into the land of Canaan. Sometimes parents keep you from doing the right thing. The only way you know that that is so is that you compare what they want you to do to the Word of God and to the guidance of the Spirit of God within you. Then you must act accordingly.

Now, this promise of this land to Abraham was later expanded in the Palestinian covenant, that this land would belong to the Jewish people forever. So that settles all the discussions as to who owns Palestine, who owns Israel, the land of Israel today. The Jews do. They are not squatters on territory that does not belong to them. It is a fact that when they have been under God's judgment, scattered all over the world, the Arabs moved in and took the territory. That is part of the burden that the Jews suffer under today. But who owns the land? It belongs to the Jews by divine fiat. Full possession of Palestine will come to the Jews but it's going to take the return of Jesus Christ before that can happen. So the point for us to remember here is that God deals with all of us on the basis of faith in His words.

He deals with us on the basis of faith in His word. The Bible is the Word of God. We refer to it in propositions of truth called doctrine, or teaching. Those are the biblical words. You cannot know the mind of God. If you do not know Scripture. You cannot know Scripture if you do not attend Sunday by Sunday an expository preaching church where the preacher is standing up and saying: here's what the Greek means, here's what the Hebrew means, here's what's in the text, and here's how it fits into the whole scaffold of structure so that some preacher is not going to trick you by giving you something that belongs to Israel.

One person this week said that a friend was going to attend a church service Saturday night. I said, well, wait a minute. What do you mean by church service Saturday night? Saturday is the Sabbath. Saturday is the Jews days. Nobody worships on Saturday except cults like Seventh Day Adventist. The point of the Christian special day Sunday, The Lord's Day, is to distinguish us from the Old Testament era. We are a special body of people to Christ. We have nothing to do with the Mosaic system. Oh, well, you can worship God any day. Yes, you can. You can have a Bible study on Saturday night. But when you talk about worshiping as the assembly of the local church, or instruction and feeding upon the Word of God, that's a Sunday operation.

So I said, why do you think people would want to do this on Saturday night? Well, I don't know. I know, to get away from the nuisance of having church to go to Sunday morning and Sunday night instead of going to the lake instead of going out and having a big day of recreation. They want to have Sunday for their day, not the Lord's Day. So don't be impressed by somebody who says we have church on Saturday night. They may have a service, but it's not church. It's a Bible study. That's OK if you want to call it that. So God says you have to have faith in my word, if you don't know the Word of God, you're going to do that kind of foolishness and you will be deceived even to the loss of your soul in the Lake of Fire.

If you're a Christian and you make it as far as going to Heaven, you have the issue of what kind of quality of life you are leading as to what kind of rewards, the quality of Heaven you will enjoy. Everybody is not going to have the same kind of Heaven.

There is a Christian poll taker named George Barna who has written a book. It's called A Second Coming of the Church. I haven't secured it yet, but I listened to him on TV. I want to get it and read it. The polls that he takes about churches and his examinations, he is well-known and highly respected in that realm. And his whole point in it is that his extensive surveys say that if the churches do not get on the stick to do their job, that in within five or ten years, the United States will be a totally pagan nation with no Scripture to hold on to, no principles on which our nation has been built. It'll be everybody's opinion of what's right and what's wrong and what you want to do. Then he listed 3 things the churches might do. Naturally, the interviewers say "What should we do?" And at the heart of it firstly is that they've got to start teaching the Word of God. They have to be instructors of doctrine. And I said to him, you're certainly right. We do that at Berean every Sunday morning and night. I thought, isn't that interesting?

**Christians/Churches Need the Word of God**

What do churches need? They don't need all these different social groups. They don't need all these different activities that they get put that puts for various levels. They don't need the entertainment. They don't need the tours to the Holy Land and the other places that they run. They can do those things, but they have to be vehicles maybe of teaching doctrine. He said 2 other things, both of which are commonplace with us. I said to Mrs. Danish there's why people at Berean Church know the Word of God. They're not perfect, but they know what's required of them from the mind of God. They have a chance to have an enriched Heaven. They will not spend their lives doing human good. They will spend their lives in divine good works which God has preordained for them to do. And if they do it, (which is an act of faith, you believe) God says some of you are going to have reward, some of you are going to lose rewards. Depends on what you do with your life in fulfilling the mission of God for you. If you believe it and you act upon it, you'll have all eternity to rejoice. If you don't, you'll have all eternity to wish you had.

Please remember, if you have a difference of opinion on spiritual matters, all these things will be resolved at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Nothing will be left hanging fire. So you want to be very confident about what you think God thinks in what you should do. You'd better be doggone sure that is compatible with Scripture because He's not going to say, oh, well, gee, I was wrong. Too bad. Sorry. Oh, no, you're not going to blow it off that way. You will pay for that being wrong for all eternity. Now, do you see why expository preaching is important, why you should not be attending churches that are playing on your emotions, or telling you the gospel every service that you've already believed?

**The Epitome of Faith**

Faith is what made Abraham the great name that he is today. He was 75 years old, a pagan to the core, and all of a sudden he believed God. Transformed, he became spiritually alive and then went all the way. And when the day came that God said, I want you to take your 13 year old boy here, Isaac, (the son of promise, the son of your old age, the impossible son through whom the savior will eventually be born,) I want you to take him up on Mariah, on the rock where the temple once stood. Some of us have stood there and looked at that rock. It is inside the Dome of the Rock (the mosque) now. He laid that boy out ready to slaughter him, put him to death, because God said do it. Faith said, "OK, this doesn't seem right. I don't understand this." But Abraham, in his mind Hebrews tells us, said, I will sacrifice the boy but God is going to keep His promise. I have faith in Him. He's not going to lie to me. He's going to bring this boy back to life. That's what he thought was going to happen. But of course, God said that's it. You've demonstrated the epitome of faith. Go and take that lamb, that ram out there, and slaughter him as a sacrifice.

Romans. 4:1-3. Refers back to this passage in Genesis as the illustration to the Jews of how they should deal with God, not on works, but on faith. Romans 4:1, "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?" He says "our forefather according to the flesh." Remember he said to the Jews, this is the man from whom we are all physically descended through Isaac and Jacob. Verse 2, "For if Abraham was justified..." All of you know what it means to be justified, it means to have absolute righteousness to your credit, imputed to you by God, because of faith in Christ. And the moment you have absolute righteousness, you cannot get any better with God. So Abraham was justified. How? Because he believed God that God would save him through a coming savior. [Romans 4:2] "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God."

Your good works gives you a justification in the eyes of men. James talks about that. You can boast about the fact, if you want to, that your true and faithful to God, you are an agape type lover of God. Agape means that you will hold nothing back from God, no ill will. You'll have perfect loyalty, complete devotion to Him. That's why Jesus said, "if you love Me, [agape is that word again,] you will keep My commandments." Aha! I want to love God. How will I do that? I'll get all sweaty and oozy and emotional. No, you won't. Only the stupid ones will do that. That's what Satan is doing to you. If you love Me, keep My commandments. Lord, what are Your commandments? Well, go down to good old BMC church. They're teaching you those commandments every Sunday morning and every Sunday night. Oh, I have to have expository teaching, then I'll know what the commandments are. Then I'll know what to obey. Then I'll really love God. You'll find that that's exactly what you will have. Your devotion to Him will have no limits. So the result of that will be you'll live a life that other people will see. It will be an honor to God and you'll be justified in their sight in that way.

**Salvation Has to Be by Grace**

But you're not going to be justified before God by your works, for what does the Scripture say? Romans 4:3, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." Drop-down to verse 16. Romans 4:16, "For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." You and I are not descendants of Abraham physically, but he is our father spiritually. We all are born again by faith, faith alone in Christ alone, nothing more. You misbehave yourself in the Christian life like a prodigal son, you will be disciplined, you betcha. But you're still going to go to Heaven. If you add your good works as a basis for self-salvation, you will be lost. So here he says, salvation had to be by grace to fulfill God's promise to Abraham in that Abrahamic covenant so that there was no human element involved, so you couldn't lose your salvation by something you could do. It all had to be a gift from God. It all had to be by grace. That way, whether you're a Jew under the law system way of life or the Christian under the grace system way of life, you are all going to be saved by faith as a result of the grace of God in Christ to you, and Abraham will be the father of us all spiritually.

Romans 4:17-18 "(as it is written, 'A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU') in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he [Abraham] believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to which had been spoken, 'SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.'" His name was Abram. God said, I'm going to make you the father of many nations. You are going to have descendants like the stars in the sky, (Those of you who have seen our recent videos on what's out there in the interplanetary world, we sit here dumbfounded, mute, on how big it is and how many stars there are) and the sands on the seashore. That's how will be your descendants so I'm going to change your name and it's going to be Abraham, Father of Many Nations.

He's 80 years old. He's down at the local pool club with the boys. He's having a good time. "What is your name?" "My name's Abraham." "Oh, Abraham, Father of Many Nations. How many children do you have?" "I don't have any!" "Eighty years old and you don't have any children? Now, how old is your wife?" "Seventy-five! Father of Many Nations?" The guy [Abraham] gets to be ninety-five years old. "How many children, Abraham?" "I don't have any." "You have a name that says you will be father of many nations and you don't even have one child? Now, how old is your wife?" "She's a sprightly eighty-five." Finally, he gets to be a hundred years old and she gets to be ninety and everything clicks into place. All of a sudden, two bodies sexually dead come alive. Ninety year old Sarah, who's now named from Sarai to Sarah, Princess, bears a son by her hundred year old husband. Now, that was a long twenty-five years to wait.

**What Faith Is/Is Not**

You see what faith means - I'm going to believe, I'm going to wait because God has spoken. Faith is not some crazy word that I've heard or some crazy word that a TV evangelist gave me, or a word some preacher who doesn't study the Bible told me. But I have it here in Scripture. I'm a Berean and I check the word and what I hear, and I see if that's what it says. If it does, I believe it.

Father of many nations, Romans 4:18-20, "In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations. And without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. "Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God." The older he got, the older she got, the more he glorified God for this tremendous miracle that's going to take place. There was never a question that he was not going to have this.

He got talked into having some doubts by Sarah. That was bad business. So he finally succumbed to her pressures and married the Egyptian girl. There was born Ishmael and started the Arab world and the contention because of that bad advice that he took from his wife, who wasn't up to par for the faith that he had.

**Faith is what Works**

He had faith that God is going to do this His way, in some way the promise will be there. Romans 4:21-24a "And being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also." So here's the tremendous promise that demonstrates again the principle of faith which makes everything work. So Romans 4:24, "but for our sakes also, to whom it will be reckoned as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." Faith worked for Abraham. Faith is what functions with you and me.

Abraham's faith in God's promise made him acceptable with God, and therefore God counted his faith as salvation. In Genesis 15:6, "Then he believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." There is the salvation! Abraham could not please God. He had relative righteousness of a religious man. As soon as he believed God, his faith was counted, or credited, to him as righteousness, absolute righteousness. Now God was free to declare Abraham as justified and He now is able to present Abraham with the great covenant of the Abrahamic promise. Abraham's works did not justify him with God, only his faith did. His salvation was by faith in the coming savior. Then God made him the promise of the future contained in the Abrahamic covenant.

**Works are Outward Sign of Faith**

Abraham's great works resulted from his justification, and they were the outward sign of his faith. This is what the Book of James is all about, for example in James 2. (It's important that you understand the frame of reference of James, because this book is used by some people to say, you see you have to have good works. Catholics love to do this in order to be saved.) In James 2:21-24, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?" While we know already from the Genesis Passage, and we know from the Romans passage, that his faith was faith in the coming savior, he was justified and saved that way. But here is a different kind of justification, in the eyes of people. That's the kind of justification we Christians are often very short on, very weak on. We do not live the lifestyle of godliness so that our justification is reflected in what we do by our lives.

Abraham was certainly justified. There was nobody there, but certainly the angels were there. And when angels saw him put that boy on that altar, there was no doubt in their minds that this was a justified man. This was a man who had God's righteousness in him. James 2:22, "You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected." Abraham's works were the result of his faith in Christ, which brought him justification. You don't use your works to get justification. Your works flow from your justification. And James 2:23, "and the Scripture was fulfilled which says 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,' and he was called the friend of God." Notice the progression. He believed God and he was saved. Then he acted accordingly, so that his inward justification was reflected outwardly where people could see it. When people saw it, they called him the friend of God.

**The Friend of God**

That's no small title. How many Christians can be called the friend of God? How many Christians can be looked upon in: what they do in life and how they operate, how they live their lives, where they invest themselves, their time, their talents, their treasures, and say that's a friend of God, right? That's a friend of God. Take a look at that person. That's a friend of God. James 2:24, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone." He's not justified by works for salvation, but he is identified as a friend of God in the eyes of people by letting his inward justification reflect an appropriate life accordingly and outwardly.

**The Result of Justification**

There are great things that are the result of justification. To Abraham there was imputed this righteousness that resulted in his justification. This is what happens to all of us, summarized for us again in the Book of Romans. Romans 4:24-25, "But for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, [He was delivered up on account of our transgressions. That's why He was put on the cross. No one else could take that wall down and preserve the holiness of God in the process.] And was raised because of our justification [on account of our justification]." Why was he raised? Because his death has been accepted and we were justified.

You see what an insult to God it is to say I can be saved today, but I can misbehave myself and be lost tomorrow? Good heavens! The Word of God says Christ would still be in the grave if you are not absolute righteousness. But because you can be absolute righteousness, God said now You can rise out of the grave. His resurrection proves our absolute righteousness.

Now, if you have absolute righteousness in God's sight, that is your standing. It is not your state; it will be when you are in His presence. Scripture says when we see Him, we shall be like Him. But if you have absolute righteousness now as far as God is concerned, how in the world can you do something to get yourself unrighteous again? Are you telling me you have some sin that nobody else has that God cannot cover with the death of Christ? That's what you're trying to tell us. Absolute righteousness, because of our justification we are absolute righteous, that's justification. Christ was raised from the dead.

**The Bottom Line-Faith Makes the Difference**

So here's the bottom line. What God did for Abraham because of Abraham's faith in the Word of God, He will do for you, if you believe that word, if you know that word so that you have something to believe. Faith in the Word of God; some of you will be able to do that, some of you will never be able to do that. Some of you will only go part-way. There are two circles of believers as there were two circles of apostles around Jesus. There was an inner core: Peter, James, and John. They were the hard core troops. Peter, James, and John were agape to the core of their being. There was nothing they would restrain from Christ. There was nothing they would hold back. They were on the line all the way. There was never any resentment, ill will, nor bitterness in them. Then there was the outer circle of the other nine. They were never in that inner circle. They were never as close to the Lord. They were never the solid agape type of believers. They produced great things, but they were not like those who walked with Christ. Faith is what made the difference. You must make your choice accordingly.

Dear Father, we do thank You so much for the Word of God, for the fact that it gives us the information that we could get nowhere else. We thank You for the challenge of the word, and we pray that Thou will help us now to apply it by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we become everything that we can be in terms of being Christ-like. The image of Jesus, that's our objective. Thank You for this provision toward that end this morning. In His name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1999

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