***Paul vs. James on Works  
RO34-01***

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We're now at Romans chapter 4. We begin a new section which we will entitle "Old Testament Salvation." This will be the first part. We're going to look at this first segment of Romans 4:1-8.

**Ambassadors of Christ**

It is no secret to you that Christians are representatives on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ who is in heaven. Our divine mission, as Christ's representatives, is to tell people how they can go to heaven forever. No believer is excused from this duty of making the gospel known to people. We are often tempted to think that this is for people who are verbal; who have a way with words; who can express themselves; or, people who are the salesmanship type. And that is not true. The duty and the joy and the privilege of being an ambassador of Jesus Christ lies upon every believer, and that includes the kids. Wherever you move in life, or in school, socially, there is a responsibility for you to be in a representative of Jesus Christ.

Maybe that doesn't mean anything more than, if you're at public school, to sit down at the lunchroom table and to bow your head in prayer. That will always create quite a stir, and it will often give you an opening to talk about not what your problem is, as people might think you have one for doing that, but what their problem is, and why it would be wise if they recognized the same God that you are thankful to for the food you are about to eat at that moment.

Every one of us is in this position of being a contact point for Jesus Christ. Whatever your profession; whatever your employment; or, whatever your business, God is constantly bringing you into touch with a stream of people who need you to be functioning as the Lord's representative.

Sometimes this duty is performed by personal witness and personal testimony, but it is also performed simply by financing the ministry of others in the Word of God. However, even though we may finance others, it does not excuse us when God brings this opportunity, as Paul says, "To be ready to give an answer for the faith that lies within us."

**Good Works**

However, having said that, there is a recurring problem in a human viewpoint idea that comes from the old sin nature of mankind to the effect that life in heaven is earned by a sinner through his own efforts. The normal opinion of people is that they must do good, and that they must be good in order to go to heaven. There's always, of course, a debate as to how good, and what constitutes good enough. Consequently, you're never certain that you have reached the goal on that basis. But doing good and being good is what everybody thinks is what God expects in order for you to have eternal life.

This idea of good works to earn eternal life is in part due to the fact that for centuries the thinking of mankind religiously was dominated by the Mosaic Law. And the Mosaic Law was very clearly a system in which people did things. It was a system where you were told that when you sinned, you brought this kind of a sacrifice. It was a system that very clearly told you what was right and what was wrong – what God demanded of you in a moral way in the Ten Commandments, and what He expected you not to do.

So, it is very natural that for this system to have dominated the thinking then at the center of human contact with God for centuries, and that people would have fallen into the idea that, "Well, how do I go to heaven? Well, I keep the Ten Commandments. I circumcise my male sons. I perform these certain rituals. I observe these certain religious holidays."

Then when we get to the Christian era, we take the same idea down, and we convert those things into Christian ideas and Christian holidays. And we pervert both the New Testament grace and the Old Testament Law system. It is very natural for people to think that the Mosaic Law says, "You please God by something that you humanly do."

Some of you people like to drink ice cream sodas. Well, ice cream sodas came about as the result of the fact that a man once ran out of flavor that he was putting in seltzer water. So, he decided to take some ice cream, which was already chocolate and strawberry, and he melted it down and put it in the seltzer water in order to flavor it because he had run out of flavoring. Well, the result was an immediate hit. As a matter of fact, the customers came so quickly that he couldn't get the ice cream melted down, so it got into the glass in chunks. And thus was born the ice cream soda. Well, it was a great success.

However, there were people who believe that ice cream sodas were intoxicating. So, there were some cities that passed a law that you could not dispense ice cream sodas on the Sabbath, by which they meant Sunday. You had to bootleg an ice cream soda on Sunday, because they felt it was bad for you, and it was going to cause you to become intoxicated.

Well, in order to get around this, one very enterprising ice cream parlor operator decided to pull the soda part off, and just put in the ice cream. And he put a flavor on the ice cream, and he called it a "sunday." Why? It was an ice cream "sunday because it could be served on Sunday. It wasn't illegal to server that. It was just illegal to serve the sodas. But they felt that was unspiritual. So, they changed it to "sundae." And thus we have today the ice cream sundae.

Every time you enjoy an ice cream sundae, I want you to realize that it is the product of the grossest kind of legalism. That's why you have it. Because they outlawed sodas on Sunday, they had to go to ice cream sundaes, and they had to change the name of it so as not to desecrate the Sabbath day. All that mishmosh is the result of the Mosaic Law being on stage center in human history, and people somehow gradually thinking that it was doing that God was interested in, rather than what God really was interested in, and that is being something – what we are, and not something as to what we are doing.

Many churches today still teach people that this kind of a concept of salvation. Some are blatantly outright telling people that you're going to be saved through your works. The Roman Catholic system does that unabashedly. But it doesn't stop there. There are plenty of Protestant groups who may even have a true doctrine of salvation of trusting faith in Christ, who are then telling people that they keep that salvation by their works.

Now, Paul took that up in the book of Galatians, and he had nothing but contempt for that. You are not saved by works, but you're going to keep yourself saved by works? And Paul's implication is: "How dumb can you be?" Yet, most of the churches and most Christians believe that if they don't stay good, they're not going to stay saved. We're going to see how bad that is as we now get into this historical portion of Romans, and they even make it worse by saying that you must trust in Christ and have water baptism; or, you must trust in Christ and take the communion service to be saved. That pretty well puts you in a position where it is almost impossible to be saved. It places upon you this very thing that Paul is going to try to now clarify here in Romans 4, and which you are going to face. As you try to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ; as you try to witness for the Lord; and, as you try to deal with the souls of people and keep them out of that hell that they're destined for, the first thing you're going to come up against is: "I have to be good to get into heaven, and I have to do that good in order to get into heaven."

Now, in Romans 4, Paul takes up this false human viewpoint idea of works as the basis of justification. In the first three chapters of Romans, he has spelled out the legal basis for justification, which has been a system that preserved the holiness of God, and still security eternal life in heaven for the sinner. That was the beauty of this system. And in the first three chapters of Romans, I hope you thoroughly understand now how God can stay righteous and yet take sinners into heaven.

Now, in Romans 4, he begins to illustrate from Jewish history a line of proof for justification by faith apart from human achievement (apart from human efforts). And, of course, that's what he was saying in the first three chapters. Justification (being declared absolute righteousness, which is what you must have in order to go to heaven) – you achieve that apart from your human doing. Now he's going to show how historically this was made very clear, even under the Mosaic Law. He's going to show that the Mosaic Law, in its proper place, has certain historical events that show that it was never a means to salvation.

He's already said that in Romans 3:20: "Therefore, by the deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in His sight. For by law is the knowledge of sin." And that word "law" there is not *the* Law (just the Mosaic Law). It includes works in general, and that works in general do not achieve eternal life, but that *the* Law, as such, was simply a mirror reflecting the dirt of sin upon us.

In Galatians 2:16, the apostle Paul states this even more clearly. In this book, of course, he was fighting the idea that God somehow is approached by human works: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall not be justified." You couldn't say it any more clearly. Whatever people have misunderstood concerning the Mosaic Law, Paul says, "Let's get it clear. It will never get you into heaven. It never was designed to get you into heaven. Nobody ever did get into heaven (that way). And people who have tried to do that, and then went out into death, are in hell at this moment. They're lying in Torments in Hades, waiting to be transferred to the lake of fire, because they were depending upon the Mosaic Law.

Paul has previously declared, however, that the Jews did have a very great advantage in possessing the Mosaic Law. The Jews, he said, were God's special people, and they boasted in this. And there was some ground for taking pride in the fact that they were God's people, though not because of any merit in themselves.

So, neither possession of the Mosaic Law, nor being God's chosen people, constituted salvation. Yet many of the Jews thought this.

We have variations of this today. People think that by being good, they're going to gain eternal life; or, they think that because they come from a good family, they're going to gain eternal life. They think that because the past were such fine Christians, they have some kind of a claim upon God. That's the same principle.

Of course, the person that we're going to get to here is this man, Abraham. He was the one that the Jews leaned on the most. He was the key to them. It was because they were related to Abraham and the gentiles were not. That was the basis of their greatest pride. This was the ground of their supreme confidence that they had it made with God.

**Conclusions of Romans 3**

You remember that Paul summed up, at the end of Romans 3, three critical conclusions as the result of what he has said up to this point in the book of Romans. Let's get those straight once more. These are in Romans 3:27-31.

Conclusion number one was God's plan of salvation leaves no ground for human boasting. The old sin nature reeks with pride in human achievement in both believers and unbelievers. But Paul says, "God's way of salvation leaves no room for human boasting." Principle number two said that since there's only one true God, his basis for salvation has to be the same for Jew and gentile. That basis is faith without works. The third conclusion was that God's way of salvation actually establishes the Mosaic Law. Jesus Christ on the cross meets the demands of the justice of God, and of the absolute righteousness that the sinner needs.

Now, beginning with Romans 4:1, we read, "What shall we say then that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found?" This word "what" introduces a rhetorical question which Paul will answer. This question actually introduces an objection that he anticipates on the basis of these three conclusions we've just gone through at the end of Romans 3. The word "What shall we say?" is the Greek word "lego." This word is a special word in Greek. It has a very specific connotation. It actually means the content of speech rather than the actual words. There is another word "laleo," which means the words spoken. "Lego" means the content. And Paul, very interestingly, uses this word "lego" in order to stress that he wants to know what the Word of God means. That's what his point is. Exactly what did it mean? Don't give me just the words.

**Memorization of Scripture**

The Jews were great at reciting words. They had to memorize Scripture. They didn't walk around with Bibles like we do. So, if they wanted Scripture, they had to stick it up here in their heads. They had to memorize it. And they could quote Scripture lesson right. But Paul says, "Don't be quoting Scripture to me. I want you to quote to me what those words mean – the content. That's why Scripture memory work is of value only if you understand what it means. It's not a value just because you can rattle off the words. But it is of great value if you know what those words mean. Then you indeed have hidden the Word of God in your heart.

Let me show you how these words are significantly used in the gospel of John, because they'll clarify the distinction, and we get these too many times in the Bible. In John 12:49, we'll illustrate in this one verse where both these words are used. Jesus says, "For I have not spoken from Myself, but the Father (God the Father) who sent Mm. He gave Me a commandment (a directive)." And then notice what he says: "What I should say," and that goes with this word "lego:" "The content (the interpretation – the explanation) of what I should say and what I should speak." And the word "speak" goes with this second word here ("laleo") – the very words that Jesus used.

So, Jesus is saying, in effect, that He did just exactly what the writers of Scripture did. This is what the writers of Scripture tell us – that God breathed into them the content of Scripture. We call that inspiration. And then it says that God carried them along as they wrote, meaning that He gave them direction to the words. God gave them the content, and God gave them the very words. That's exactly what Jesus, in His humanity, said: "I came. I preached. I was God's representative. I did My job of representing Him. And I did it the way all of us are supposed to do it." He gives you the content and the message, and He gives you the way to present that message – the words in which to speak it.

When the disciples got hit with persecution (right off the bat in the early days), this is the first thing by which the Lord comforted them. They were worried: "What are we going to say? We're going to stand up here before the judges; before the Sanhedrin; and, before the rulers of the nation. That's scary. I don't know what to say." The Lord said, "Don't worry. I'm going to tell you what to say. I'll give you the content, and I'll give you the words that you speak."

This is how the Bible was written. This is why you must remember that the Bible not only is content from God, but its very words are inspired. That's why we study words, because it is from the words of Scripture that we can find what God is saying to us. This is why it is so ludicrous that we have this great attack that we have in evangelical circles today against inerrancy in Scripture. Inerrancy means that every word in the Bible (the very words in the Bible) are without mistake. There are no mistakes in the Bible in the original manuscripts. Some great seminaries, like Fuller out on the West Coast, has completely abandoned the idea that God's Word is inerrant. Oh, they'll say: "It's inspire. The content comes from God, but the words might be wrong. The words might present error, and there is error in Scripture."

Well, Jesus, here in John 12:49, is using these two words: "What I should say (content) and what I should speak (the words). So, the Lord Jesus, in His humanity, was directly led of the Spirit of God in His testimony. His teachings were directly from the Father in content and actual vocabulary. Of course, it should be quite evident that you cannot speak about spiritual things unless you use the right kind of vocabulary. Words have to have the right meaning.

So, Paul's question here has to do with the content of a statement about the patriarch Abraham and his salvation. He's not asking, "How shall we phrase it?" He's saying, "Now, what are we going to say? What is the principle? What is the content? What is the basic idea that we're going to present' the principle' and, the content about our patriarch Abraham?" This "lego" is in the future tense – anytime there is a discussion of Abraham's salvation experience. It is active voice. Paul is making this statement.

"What shall we say then?" And the word "then" is this Greek word "oun," which indicates that he is referring back to these three conclusions at the end of chapter 3. He's saying, now in view of those three conclusions, what are we going to say>" You will notice, if you run your eyes over those conclusions, in verses 27-31, that in verse 28, he refers to faith as the critical factor. In verse 30, he says, "Faith is the critical factor." And in verse 31, faith is the critical factor. So, in each conclusion, the critical factor is faith.

So, Paul says, "Now therefore," and that goes back to those three conclusions: "What are we going to say about Abraham?" And Abraham looks like this in the Greek "Abraam," the father of the Jewish nation. He's the only gentile who ever became a Jew. All others, to be Jews, must be born Jews. All have agreed (and all would agree) that Abraham was justified before God. The question was: "How was he justified before God?" This is a critical question because Abraham is the pattern for all the Jews. He's the pattern not only for the Jews, really, but as we shall see, for all gentiles, when it comes to this matter of salvation – to this matter of spending eternity and heaven instead of in hell.

**Paul vs. James on Works**

The Jews leaned very heavily on the good works of Abraham. We must recognize that Abraham did do some things that we must consider very commendable. James 2:17-24 express this concept concerning Abraham, and I want to read it to you. James says, "Even so, faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, 'You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'"

Now, verse 18 is the critical verse to help you to understand exactly what James is talking about. James is indeed talking about works relative to justification, but he's talking about works in a little different way than Paul talks here back in Romans. James is talking about works in terms of *showing* that you're born again. Paul is talking about works in terms of trying to get to be born again by your works. That's a great difference. If you get verse 18, you won't be confused about James. You won't say, "Well, James is contradicting Paul."

Verse 18 once more: "Yea, a man may, 'You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'" He is saying, "I'll show you my justification as a result of how I live and how I perform."

"You believe that there is one God, and you do well. The demons also believe and tremble, but will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he had offered Isaac, his, son upon the altar?" Now, that seems very contradictory. Paul is about ready to prove that Abraham was not justified by works. James says, "Was he not justified by works?"

However, if you remember the principle in verse 18, verse 21 immediately explains *how* Abraham was justified. He was justified by being willing to put his son on an altar, and proceeding to execute him (to offer him as a sacrifice), as God had commanded him. James has pointed out that the only way that Abraham would have done a thing like that is because he was born again – because he was a man of God. He was internally justified. If he was not justified, he would have said, "God, I don't care. I just can't do that to this kid. I won't kill him. He's a teenager as it is, and I just wouldn't do this to him. He's got his whole life before him." An unsaved man would have done that.

James's point is that Abraham was justified, not before God, but in the eyes of those who stood around him. In the eyes of people, his testimony to eternal life was confirmed by his performance. "You see how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." It had its fullest expression: "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which said, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called a friend of God.'" And here, James is quoting the very passage that Paul is going to quote in a moment, from the book of Genesis – how Abraham was saved. James makes it very clear that Abraham believed God, and salvation on the basis of his faith was imputed to him. Yet, James makes it clear that what was imputed to Abraham was externally made real by the kind of life Abraham lived.

The gospel puts it this way: "By their fruits, you shall know them." Somebody may go around and says, "I'm a born-again Christian. I'm in the family of God. I possess absolute righteousness by imputation of God." Then his life betrays every moral principle. His life reveals that only the sin nature dominates and guides him. Then the Scripture says, "You may have a serious question whether that person is indeed born-again." His works do not confirm his claim to internal faith. And many people are counting on something else: some external moves; some walking of the aisle; some raising of the hand; or, some praying for God to save them. They're depending upon that rather than the fact that they have simply trusted themselves to God to solve the problem for them. So, they don't have internal salvation, and that's why outwardly they cannot act like a child of God. They continue to act like the children they are – the children of the devil.

James says, "You'll act like a child of God, providing you are one internally." Sometimes you want, but you won't be able to unless you are. Only those who are can act like the children of God. James says that that's what made the difference to Abraham. He was saved internally, and therefore, verse 24 says: "You see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." But again, he's using the word "justified" there as he explained it in verse 18 – in terms of what people see. In terms of the eyes of other people, your salvation is confirmed by what you do.

So, Abraham's justification is said to be based on his works in the eyes of people. James is stressing the fact of the normalcy of outward evidence for one's internal justification. It proves salvation to people. Paul condemns works in the unbeliever for gaining salvation, but at the same time, Paul comments works in the believer. One is human good, and the other is divine good.

An example of this is in that famous passage in Ephesians 2:8-9, where the apostle Paul says, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." In those two verses, Paul condemns works for justification.

However, then notice verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

So, here in this passage, Paul says, "I condemn works as far as securing justification; but to you who are believers, as an expression of your service to the Lord."

You will notice that he says, "The works which God has ordained. There are many good works that you should not be engaged in as a believer. There are only certain good works which are specifically designed as God's program for your service. That's what is our day-by-day concern – to ferret out exactly what it is that the Lord is calling us to do specifically, so that we do not get ourselves dissipated in trying to serve in directions that he has not called us to serve; that therefore we are not competent to serve in; and, that we're not going to be most effective in.

We are not saved by works, but we earn treasures in heaven by works. So, works are important, and James was commending this. And he was not in competition with Paul. Paul speaks of justification as a once-for-all event before God at the point of trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. James speaks of justification as approving of the reality of one's salvation with the production of divine good works.

So, this is the difference between the two. They're very important, and we need to observe that.

If Abraham is justified by faith apart from his good works, then the point is here that it's true of all of his descendants as well. Paul is about to declare to us that fact. So, he says, "Well, let's take a look at Abraham" in verse 1. That's what he means: "What shall we then say about Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh?" In the Greek, this is really "our forefather." It's our "propater." What he means here is "our ancestor:" "Looking at our ancestor, Abraham, what shall we say concerning him, our forefather, as pertaining to in reference to the flesh;" that is, the Jews were very proud that they could say: "Within my body flow the genes of the patriarch Abraham. I am descended in direct line from Abraham. I am a Jew by physical birth." And to them, they equated that with absolute salvation. Their relationship to Abraham was what they leaned upon that God was going to take them to heaven.

So, Paul says. "Well, let's see about that. Let's take a look at our father – the one that you're so proud of, our ancestor, with whom you have a direct physical relationship:" "As to Abraham, what did he find?" The Greek word is "heurisko." "Heurisko means "to discover." What did he discover? It is perfect tense. What did he discovered in the past such that it continued? It is active voice. What did Abraham himself discover? It is infinitive. What did he discover as to the divine purpose?

So, the question of verse 1 is simply this: what is the case as it concerns the justification of Abraham (the Jews' ancestor) after the flesh? What's the case? Verse 2 takes up what the case is. It says, "For." This is that little word "gar." It is used here to introduce a supposition about Abraham's experience of salvation (an answer to the question in verse 1). Paul is going to set up a hypothesis for the sake of argument, and then he's going to show that this hypothesis is wrong. He's not saying, in verse 2, that this is the case: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he has something of which to glory, but not before God."

Paul says, "Suppose that Abraham was saved by good works. That's what the Jews and many others claim to do. The word "if" in the Greek is our little word "ei." And it introduces, as you know, one of the four classes of conditions in the Greek language. You would never know it from English. This happens to be a first-class condition. Normally, the first class condition indicates that a thing is true, and that's what conditions tell us. The Greek language tells you "if," but it tells you "if" in such a way that you know whether it is true or it is not true. Well, first class condition is "if" which is true, or if a person pretends it's true for the sake of argument. You have to get both those. Most of the time a first class "if" says it really is true. But here, it's one of those cases where he says, "I'm going to pretend this is true for the sake of argument, and I'm going to give reality to a false premise. Thus, this "if" is introduced in a hypothesis.

"If he were justified;" and there's our word again: you will remember it: "dikaioo." We've had it several times, it needs to be declared absolutely righteous. This is in the aorist tense. At the point of Abraham's meeting the divine requirement for salvation, God says, "You're righteous." It is passive voice, because God has to do it. Abraham can't justify himself. There's our first clue. Abraham's works are not involve. It's passive voice. It's beautiful if you can read the Greek. The Greek would read this and say, "Hey, wait a minute. That "dikaioo" is passive. There's your answer. It can't be his worse. This is something that somebody else did for him – not that he did for himself. He just was the recipient. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact – the fact that Abraham, in God's eyes, was totally conformed to the will of God. That's what justification means.

"If Abraham (let's suppose) were declared absolutely righteous by (or 'out from' works." These are the works of the old sin nature: "He has." And the word "has" is the Greek word "echo." "Echo" introduces the conclusion of this "if" clause. "If Abraham is declared righteous as the result of his human works, then here's a conclusion: "He has something." "Something of which" is not in the Greek. You'll notice it's in italics. The Greek says, "He simply has "kauchema." He simply has "a ground for boasting."

This, in your King James translation, sounds like it's a verb. It says, "To glory," but it's really a noun: "He has no ground of boasting." Once more, let's review this word "kauchema." Previously, we had this word in Romans 3:27: "Where is boasting then?" In Romans 3:27, it was with the "sis" ending. There are two words for boasting: "kauchema;" and, "kauchesis." The ending "sis" is active. It stresses the act of boasting. It stresses going about bragging; pride; expressing it; and, carrying on. But you may take the same word and have it passive, just to refer to the act. That's the "ma" ending, and that's what Paul is using here. It's not an active ending. It is simply stating the act itself. It is simply stating the ground of boasting. That's what he has in mind here.

In 2 Corinthians 8:24 (you might want to look this up at your leisure), you'll find an example of this, where it uses "kauchesis" with the "sis" active ending. And it stresses the act of boasting. And there, Paul is saying to these Corinthians Christians: "I am taking great pride in boasting in the fact that you are so liberal in your giving to this fund that we're collecting for the poor saints to Jerusalem." He said, "I just rejoice, and I am boasting. I talk to people, and I said, "Boy, I'll tell you what the Corinthians are doing for this fund. They're really getting behind this program, and they're really giving for those saints in Jerusalem.”

However, in 2 Corinthians 9:3, he asks them not to do anything to rob him of this ground of glorying in them; that is, failing to meet their decision to give. He uses "kauchema," the passive, which stresses the ground for boasting.

So, up in Romans 3:27, Paul says, "Where is boasting then? It's excluded: "kauchesis:" "Where is going around and actively bragging about yourself, and commending yourself? It is out." The same thing is true of the Christian right. But now Paul, here in verse 2, is saying, "If Abraham was declared absolute righteousness on the basis of his works, then he has a "kauchema," which is a ground for boasting. He has a ground for praising himself. He's got a basis." It's not that Abraham was going around actively bragging, but he does have a ground. What is that ground?

Well, the ground is that, by his own efforts, he has actually achieved eternal life. If Abraham had been justified because of his good works, he has something to brag about. He produced merit that was acceptable with God. He has a self-achieved attainment. Every old sin nature wants it. So, Paul is stressing Abraham's ground for boasting for his salvation if it comes by works.

Let's sum this up in a syllogism, just to make this clear what Paul is saying in verses 1 and 2. A syllogism is a way of coming to a logical conclusion. You have a major premise; and, you have a minor premise. The major premise that Paul presents is this: If a man is justified by works, he has a ground for glory. The minor premise is: Abraham was justified by works. The conclusion, therefore, must be that Abraham had a ground for glory.

Now, just so you won't go home and say that this is what I taught you, let me say that that is not so. This is a false syllogism. This is a tricky syllogism. And I'll show you where the problem lies. The major premise is OK, but the minor premise is false. Paul is going to demonstrate that that's false, and therefore, the conclusion is false. Abraham was not justified by his works, and consequently, Abraham did not have a ground for glory, because he had no works of which to glory.

Paul refutes the syllogism by showing that the minor premise is false. So, he says, at the end of verse 2: "But not before God." And the word "but" is "alla," which is one of the stronger adversatives in the Greek language. Then he follows that with another strong word. This is "not," and this is the strongest Greek negative that there is ("ou") – absolutely not. He negates any claim to that minor premise. So, he slaps both "alla" and "ou" onto this minor premise. He attaches them both, and he says, "No, no, double-no! That is not true. Abraham was not justified by his works. The premise is false. And it is false, he says, specifically: "Before God." The word "before" is a preposition in the Greek: "pros." We generally translate this as "toward." It means face-to-face. This is a very significant preposition. I hope you will become acquainted with it. This means face-to-face.

The idea is "in the presence of God." He says, "No, he doesn't have a ground for boasting. He may before men (whatever he has before men). And a lot of people looked upon Abraham, and he did some flying things, but not before God. That kind of a good work was useless before God. That's what this word means.

Now, this preposition is very important to you in another respect, if you'll turn to Ephesians 4:12, where it tells you what the local church service is all about, and why God gave us a pastor-teacher gift in the local church. It is this word that tells you what you need to do to go on in the Christian life. Without functioning on what this word is saying, you're dead in the Christian life. You're dead in all spiritual progress. You're dead in ever developing a spiritual maturity structure in your soul. You're dead in never going on to super-grace level living. You're dead in ever exercising your spiritual gifts and storing treasures in heaven. It's all bound up in this little world "pros," because in Ephesians 4:12, he says, "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." That word "for" at the beginning Ephesians 4:12 is this word "pros:"

"For the perfecting (or the equipping) of the saints. And it uses the word "pros," meaning face-to-face. What is this dependent upon? Upon the fact that up in verse 11, God says, "He gave pastor-teachers," that last spiritual gifts: "Evangelists and pastor-teachers" that we still have with us today. The pastor-teacher gift was given *for* the purpose of face-to-face instruction.

So, the saints are prepared for spiritual combat by face-to-face teaching of doctrine by a pastor-teacher. This is the purpose of the pastor-teacher gift. It is largely prostituted by ministers in the pulpit today. And many times that's because the congregation insists that the pastor prostitute what he is supposed to be doing with the pastor-teacher gift. They will not give him the time and the freedom to study the Word of God, and to hack out, and to dig out, what is in the text, so that he may stand up and explain to them, so that they can walk off with their souls enriched, and not simply reading a few English words, and coming up with a few ideas that may strike them out of their old sin nature. Instead, he is to be able to feed into their mentalities the very mind of Christ. Without a pastor-teacher, you're not going to get much of the mind of Christ.

If you sit at home (even if you have a pastor-teacher who tries to do the job), you're not getting the mind of Christ. It says, "Pros." Your finest hour before God in your life is when you are face-to-face in the presence of the authority of the pastor-teacher gift functioning on the Word of God, which is where the authority comes from – functioning on the authority of the Word of God. That is the finest hour in your life.

The basic way that a believer grows to gain spiritual maturity; to build a spiritual maturity structure in his soul; and, to go on to super-grace living is by the functioning wrapped up in this little preposition "pros" – face-to-face teaching.

Abraham, specifically here in Romans, is told that he had, in face-to-face contact with God (in the presence of God), absolutely nothing. This is just as you will have very little of your spiritual life if you do not stay in the presence of your pastor-teacher. So, Abraham, in the presence of God, relative to his works, had nothing. In the presence of men, he had some commendation, but in the presence of God, he had nothing.

So, it says, "But not before God." And it uses this word "theos," which is stating to us that whatever Abraham's good words gave him the glory in before men, they absolutely had no merit before God. He had some fine things, as we have seen. The Jews rightfully venerated Abraham. But the minor premise, Paul says is faults, because before God, Abraham did not have anything to glory in.

Let's get back to the minor premise: Therefore, Abraham was not justified by his works because God does not accept those works. Those works are not commendable before God. Therefore, he has no grounds for boasting, which is the conclusion stated back in Romans 3:27. There is no ground for boasting. Now he has demonstrated this. Abraham's good works indeed were a glory to someone, but they were not a glory to him. Your good works are a glory to someone. And I would not dismiss the fact that the good things that you do (divine good works) under the leading of the Spirit of God – those are very important. They are very valuable.

However, that Matthew 5:16 gives us the perspective on that. It says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. We're back to no boasting. You do produce good things. When you're functioning on the Spirit of God's leading, you doing great things. You are a light in a world of darkness, and God says, "Those are good works." And as long as you remember who's doing it, those good works will be to the glory of God. That's why we say, "We serve as unto the Lord."

There are some Christians who always want to serve as unto themselves. So, they're waiting for someone to come and congratulate them; for someone to thank them; for someone to commend them; or for someone to recognize them, and they never get very far in the Christian life. We don't have to thank you for serving the Lord. We don't have to thank you for the fact that you have invested your soul, and have made yourself rich in heaven.

You come along, and you buy a very valuable stock, and you make all kinds of money. And we should thank you for the fact that you got rich? You just use some good judgment. So, don't look for thanks. Otherwise, you do what God says He will not allow you to do. God says, "I will not share My glory with another.” The minute you try sharing the glory of what you do with God, you're cut off, and you've lost your treasure.

1 Peter 2:9 says the same thing: "But you are a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; a holy nation; a people of His own, that you should show forth the praises of" who? Yourself? No: "the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

So, God's grace indeed enables the sinner to meet God's revealed will. God alone always gets us the justification which our works never can secure for us.

So, Paul is indicating, in these two verses, when he brings up the question: "What about Abraham?" And what Paul says is that Abraham was not justified by works. If he were, he'd have something to brag about, and the Bible says that you can't get to heaven on any basis that enables you to brag. Therefore, that is false. The same is true in New Testament times.

So, this confirms Paul's second conclusion in Romans 3:29-30. That is that there is but one God, and therefore, there's only one basis of salvation, and he's going to show that that's by grace through faith.

Those conclusions will bear majestic fruit in your life, both now and in eternity.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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