***God's Promise by Grace and Faith
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If you'll turn to Romans 4:16-18, we'll pick up our study there. We are moving now to a new section. Our topic here is "Faith in Spite of Facts."

In the book of Romans, Paul set out to explain in a systematic way God's solution for man's sin problem, so that eternal fellowship can be established between God and the sinner. Here's what Paul's argument has been thus far in this book. Let's review it briefly.

**A Review of Romans up to Now**

Paul has shown us that all are sinners in need of absolute righteousness to enter heaven. That includes immoral, moral, and religious people. Paul has shown that no one can successfully achieve the absolute righteousness that he needs as a result of his own efforts. Therefore, every person is desperately lost. He has shown that everyone has a chance to be saved. God has made Himself known. God has extended the awareness of Himself to every human being.

Paul has also shown us that the only way a sinner can obtain the absolute righteousness he needs is if God simply gives it to him as a gift – as an act of divine grace. Then Paul has shown, therefore, that the grace gift of absolute righteousness can only be received by faith. You have to believe God in order to receive this righteousness. He has shown that Jesus Christ has paid for all sin, and thereby satisfied the justice of God to permit him to give a believing sinner absolute righteousness.

Paul has also shown that no human work can be included as the basis for obtaining salvation, and for that salvation to still be by grace. There can be no work such as circumcision or law-keeping. If you include that, then you have neutralized grace. And if you neutralize grace, there is no salvation.

Finally, Paul has shown that salvation by grace, through faith, was the Old Testament way of salvation. He is illustrating this by the great patriarch of the Jewish people, Abraham.

So, all this now has preceded the verses that we're looking at now. All this, in one way or another, Paul has hammered home in a variety of ways. So, Paul has made it very clear that the human situation is desperate, but God has provided a solution. A sinner can have his guilt paid for and removed, and thereby be qualified to receive absolute righteousness to enter heaven.

**God's Promise to Abraham**

Now Paul closes Romans chapter 4 with a blazing description of the magnificent faith of Abraham in the promises of God, which brought Abraham salvation. The reason Paul is doing this, before he takes up a different direction of discussion here in chapter 5, is because the same condition existed in his day that exists in our day of people trying to make it with God according to how they behave themselves, or how they don't behave themselves. That is an automatic knee-jerk reaction of the sin nature.

So, Paul has been hammering again and again that: "Friend, it is faith in what God has promised, and that's all that's going to count with God. And if you are depending on something else, you're going to spend eternity in hell. If you are trying to mix something else with what God has offered on a grace basis, you're going to spend eternity in hell.

So, this is a very serious subject that Paul deals with here, and he tries to hammer it home once more before he leaves the subject of faith, and moves on.

Now, I've had recent discussions with people who simply cannot take this seriously, and who simply cannot get too excited over the fact that there are some denominations that teach people that the only way you're going to get to heaven is by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior, and having water baptism; and, if you leave one or the other, you're going to hell. And it is a fantastic thing that some people say, "Oh well, that's not so serious," instead of saying, "I must recoil from such an idea. I'm astounded and alarmed at those people, because having done that, the very thing that they think is securing them in salvation (that water baptism addition) is ensuring that they're going to hell.

This is going to be a terrible thing to spend your life reading the Bible; to spend your life giving money to God's work; to spend your life exalting Jesus Christ and praising Him; to spend your life rejoicing at Christmas time and at Easter time; and, to spend your life helping the missionaries spend a lot of people who actually get to heaven, and then for you to pass through death, and to suddenly find yourself in Hades, in actual Torments, and say, "My God, what happened? Here I was a Christian church member all my life and I'm in hell?" That's exactly what's going to happen. Now, that's a terror to consider. That's a terror to envision.

**Grace Means Faith Plus Nothing**

So, that is why the apostle Paul, who knows that that's what happens, is coming down so hard at the close of this chapter. And I hope you will pay attention and listen carefully. This is heavy stuff at this point. But if you get this straight, you're going to be straight for the rest of your Christian life all the way through. This is critical. And people simply cannot understand that God's system is grace, and that *grace means faith plus nothing.* And you're not going to change it by adapting it to some human logic that appeals to you. I'm warning you. You're not going to adapt what God has set up and what is compatible with His character because your logic or your sense of values say, "Well, it's not too bad if a person says, 'I trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, but I think I should be baptized.'"

Paul knows this. And if you don't know it, you better learn it this morning. This is serious ground upon which we are treading.

So, Paul closes this with a blazing, magnificent description of justification by faith. We begin with verse 16. Paul says, "Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The word "therefore" is actually two words in Greek. First, there is the word "dia," which means "on account of." It's a little preposition. Then there is a pronoun "houtos," which means "this." And when you put these two together, you get literally "on account of this" thing. It's in the neuter case. We would translate it "for this reason."

So, the apostle Paul begins verse 16 with the expression "for this reason." For what reason? He's going to make a summary statement that simply is going to bring it all together now. This is everything he's been talking about. He has hammered these points in from various angles. Now he says, "I'm going to put it to you in one precise, concise statement. If you learn this, you'll go to heaven. If you compromise, this will go to hell. So, get ready. Here it is." This is a critical introductory word.

**The Facts of the Promise**

On account of what? Well, on account of facts which have been established in verses 13-15. These facts are ... Let's get the background so that you'll know what "therefore" is referring to.

1. **It was not by Doing Certain Works**

The preceding verses have established that the promise to Abraham and his spiritual posterity to possess the world and the kingdom of God was not conditioned by God on their doing certain works. This is a matter of the Genesis record that we have read, and we have studied, and we have seen – that God made a promise to Abraham that included that man's personal salvation and that that promise was in no way conditioned upon anything that Abraham did – whether he was a nice guy; whether he was a bad guy; whether he behaved himself; or, whether he was a sinner, or not a sinner. It had no conditions whatsoever. That's a matter of the Genesis record. If that makes you uncomfortable to think that, or if it makes you uncomfortable to hear that said, so be it. But that is the first point that these verses, 13-15. If they've taught us anything, they have taught us that – that the Genesis account, where this promise is presented, is not conditioned upon any doing of certain works, either by Abraham or by those who followed him.

1. **It was a Free Grace Gift**

The promise was offered exclusively to Abraham on the basis of his belief in God and accepting the gift. In other words, it was a grace offer. The promise was exclusively presented on the basis of Abraham simply accepting this gift. It was a free grace gift.

1. **It Could Only be Received by Faith**

The promise was therefore offered as a grace gift, and so could only be received by faith – not works. It was offered as a grace gift. A grace gift can only be received by faith. That's self-evident. That's what grace means. The word grace means: "I'm going to *give* you something. Now, if I'm going to give you something, you cannot be earning it. You cannot be paying me for it. The moment you try to earn it, or the moment you try to pay me for it, it is no longer a gift. Therefore, you have neutralized the grace aspect.

Now, God says: "There is nobody going to be in heaven except by My grace. There is nobody going to be in My heaven except by My grace, and by My grace alone. Therefore, Paul's point is it that it is a self-evident fact (that being the case) that the only way a person can be saved is by faith. And Paul is fighting off all these people who are getting mixed up with the Mosaic Law, and other religious rituals of one kind and another, and trying to bring them in as part of the basis of salvation. If the promise is fulfilled to those who earn it by good works, then the faith basis is eliminated.

That's exactly what Paul said in these preceding verses. Paul said, "Now if it does come by works, then there's no promise involved here, because the promise is offered by grace only, to those who operate apart from any human works. So, since the promise is offered by grace only to those who operate by faith, those who operate on law cannot be the heirs of God." And that's what he means.

This is a terrible blow to legalists. Legalists are people who try to gain God's favor by something that they do, or something that they do not do. And Paul's point is that the promise is apart from law-keeping. So, those who are trying to keep some commandments of God – they are not the heirs of God.

1. **Keeping Commandments Nullifies the Promise**

If the promise is to be fulfilled on the basis of keeping divine commandments, then the promise itself is nullified. Divine commandments make known the will of God. This was Paul's line of reasoning again. Paul said, "Divine commandments make known the will of God."

**Sins vs. Transgressions**

Now, once the will of God is known, it is a definite statement of: "Thou shalt not." Therefore, when you violate a specific commandment, you are now guilty of sin in the form of transgression. Sin in the form of transgression always expands the seriousness of the sin. It compounds the sin. That is what happens. Once you know that God says, "Don't do this," and you do it, then the sin is terrifically compounded. Once you know that God says, "Do not be sexually immoral," and you do it, man, you are in terrific trouble.

Now if you do that same sin without knowing that God has a rule against it, it would still be sin, but it would not be as grave a violation as it is when you know what God has said. When God says, "Don't steal," and then you steal, now you have compounded the sin to what the Bible calls a transgression. Any sin which is a transgression is a much more serious sin, and brings much more divine judgment upon it.

**Degrees of Suffering in Hell**

So, this is one of the bases upon which we would conclude that in hell there will be degrees of suffering. People who did not know the rules of God, but who broke them, will suffer for their sin, but not to the intensity of the ones who are guilty of transgressions. Transgressions can only be committed by those who have been taught the Word, and they know what God says. They know the principles of God's character, and thus of God's operating – what God wants us to do, and what God does not want us to do.

Since transgression always brings divine wrath down upon the violator, and since nobody can keep the commandments of God perfectly, all law systems, or all commandment-keeping systems inevitably bring the wrath of God upon a person – not blessing. Even though you know all the rules of God, I'll guarantee you that you will not be able to keep them. And if you violate the rules of God, you're going to bring God's wrath upon you because you have compounded sin into a transgression.

So, if you understand this, any rule-keeping system, or any work-keeping system is doomed. Anybody is just ridiculous to come to talk to you about: "How do I go to heaven? Well, you've got to be good. How good? Well, real good. You really have to try hard. You're going to have to keep the golden rule and the Ten Commandments." And right away you know that you're talking to an asinine creature who simply is operating on human viewpoint, who doesn't know the first thing about what God thinks and how God acts. Once he knows the rules, I guarantee you that he's going to break them.

So, since commandment-keeping brings, in the nature of the case, only divine wrath, the promise of blessing to Abraham could never have been fulfilled by works, because the promise was just one huge package of blessing. And Paul's point is that it had to be by faith. If it was by work-keeping, there wouldn't have been blessing from that promise. There would only have been cursing. The result would have been that there would have been no promise at all. It would have been invalidated.

Therefore, the only thing a law-keeping system (a work system) can do is to condemn a sinner. It can never save him.

So, this word "therefore," at the beginning of verse 16, looks back at all this in verse 13-15, which he has so clearly established. These are the things, and these are the points that he has driven home. He says, "Therefore, looking back upon all these facts, I am now going to state a divine viewpoint principle, which if you will remember and if you will act upon, it will keep you out of hell and we'll get you into heaven. And it will furthermore keep you from wasting your life as a Christian, and will enable you to store treasures in heaven. If you do not get this principle, you will lose out on both accounts.

In order to make this clear, Paul uses a device of the Greek language where he knocks out the verbs. That causes the critical words to stand out in a sentence like spotlights that are just flashing on and off against you. So, the verbs are eliminated. You will see that in the opening part of verse 16, because they are in italics in the English. "It is" is not, therefore, in the Greek at all. It is left out. It's what we call elliptical speech, deliberately to place emphasis upon the facts.

The word "of" is there. It is the word "ek," which means "out from," or we translate it as: "from the source of." That's the idea. Therefore, in view of these preceding facts from the source of what? Faith (pistis"), which means "trust." This is actually matching up a statement that came at the beginning of the preceding section up in verse 13. From the source of faith in verse 16 is being matched up against the phrase "through the law." The two are just the opposite. The two are mutually exclusive.

**Faith**

So, Paul is saying, "Therefore, in view of these facts that we have established, out from the source of faith, that." The word "that is the Greek word "hina," which introduces the purpose – why it is of faith: "In order that" is the idea. "It's of faith," which means "trust in God." Here is God's word to Abraham. That's what he believed. Faith in God's word, in other words, is the key to securing absolute righteousness that everyone needs. Paul's point is that faith was the means of Abraham's justification. By omitting this verb, it focuses attention, first of all, on this word "faith."

So, as you look in the Greek sentence, that word sticks out. Your attention is focused on it because there is no verb. Faith alone can secure the imputation of absolute righteousness from God to the sinner’s account, as was clearly demonstrated in Abraham's experience. And Paul's point is that the faith system of Abraham has not been eliminated today. This is the system that's still the way God works.

"In order that." Again, the verbs are left out. "It might be" is not in the Greek. But what is in the Greek is: "by." This time, it's the preposition "kata," which means "according to" or "by the method of:" "according to a standard or pattern." It indicates the basis upon which God justifies a sinner. And that is grace ("charis"), which means "the favor of God." The idea is a gift.

**Grace**

So, the second word that stands out is "grace." As you read the sentence in the Greek, it simply says, in an elliptical fashion: "Therefore of faith, that by grace," and these two words stand out. The whole point here is that God is speaking about that which is the thing that characterizes Him supremely – His grace. It refers to His love providing justification apart from anything the sinner merits, or anything that he deserves. The grace system indicates a gift from God rather than by reward which is earned by works. And that's the point of this ellipse: "Therefore of faith, that by grace" – that it can be a gift. If it's not by faith, it can't be a gift. That's what this sentence is saying. If it's not by faith, it can't be a gift. Only faith can make it a gift.

God wanted Abraham simply to believe Him, and thus to use the grace system, which requires faith alone. And Abraham's promise was offered on a grace basis so that all that was necessary to receive it was simply faith in God's Words.

So, that establishes this principle – that if God saves a sinner on the basis of grace, which is what the Bible tells us, then it can only be received by means of faith alone. No human doing of any kind can be accepted. It establishes the principle that, in justification, God's part is grace, while the sinner's part is faith.

So, Paul's case here for justification is a strong one from Old Testament history. He summarizes everything he said in this elliptical statement. If we were going to fill out this ellipse, it would go something like this. This is what this little short, concise statement actually means: "Therefore, since law cannot secure anything but divine wrath, the promised salvation is from the source of faith, in order that it might be by means of a gift to believing sinners." That's actually what that short, concise statement means.

There is a reason for this: "Therefore a faith, that by grace, to the end." "To the end" is the Greek preposition "eis." In the Greek, it's used with the infinitive form of the verb. And when the Greek does that, it tells us that that word indicates purpose to us. That is giving us the purpose why God does salvation on this grace basis. So, we would translate it: "For the purpose of." And the purpose is relative to the promise: the "epaggelia" that we had before. And it has the definite article: "*the* promise," indicating that he has in mind the one specifically to Abraham described in Genesis 12:1-3 which we've already looked at.

"That it might be." That's the verb "to be:" "eimi." This is the verb for expressing the status quo. It's in the present tense. This is going to constantly be. God wants to do things relative to salvation so that something is always true about it. It's active. It's the actual status of this promise to Abraham. And it's in the infinitive, because, as we showed you with this little preposition up here, that is the way the Greek indicates that God is telling us: "Here's My purpose in doing it this way. I'm doing it in order that something would be true about the promise."

What is that? "That it might be sure." The Greek word is "bebaios," which means "firm" or "steadfast." This is an interesting word because this is a legal term. In the New Testament Scriptures, the Greek language keeps cropping up with these Greek legal terms. Well, here's one of them. This is what a law uses. A law frequently used the word "bebaios," and it meant that a thing was legally guaranteed. It had a security that was a legally guaranteed security. It is referring here to the act of justification. He is talking about the fact that God has used this grace faith method for the purpose that the promise made to Abraham, which included his personal salvation, might be sure – that it might be guaranteed.

**Justification is a Legal Verdict by God**

Justification is a legal verdict by God as the judge of the universe. You must view justification as that. That's why sometimes the theologians say, "That's a forensic act." The word "forensic" means "legal." If you should run across that word in your reading, it simply means "legal." It's just God who, as judge, looks down from His bench, and He pronounces a verdict upon every sinner. And upon some sinners, He says, "Justified;" and, upon some sinners, He says, "Not justified."

The basis upon which God passes this judgment as a judge is whether the person possesses absolute righteousness. If God sees that a person has absolute righteousness, He says, "You're justified." If He sees that he likes it, He says, "You're not justified."

This verdict, this word tells us, can never be overturned. If God says, "You're justified," it can never be overturned. There is no higher court above God to overturn this verdict. This is a very significant Greek word. God says, "I've used a method of salvation that leaves Me, the supreme judge, as the person who decides whether you get into heaven or not. And I put it on the basis that there can be no question that I have not compromised My own character. I've not compromise My own holiness."

That's just exactly what Satan would like God to do. Satan is just itching for God to compromise His own character relative to us sinners, so that God Himself can be guilty of sin. Then Satan has a totally different relationship and a considerable advanced upper hand over God in his battle of the angelic conflict.

This verdict can never be overturned because of the way the sinner has received his absolute righteousness. It was provided by God Himself as a grace gift, apart from the works of the merit of the sinner. God is free to give this gift of absolute righteousness because Jesus Christ has paid the sinner's guilt. God isn't pretending that this person is not guilty when he is guilty. The reason God is saying, "You're not guilty; you're justified; and, you have absolute righteousness" is because that is actually the case, because Christ has paid the guilt. Therefore, God can give this as a grace gift.

The sinner does nothing to receive this kind of absolute righteousness, and this kind of judgment from God. All he does is he believes God. There are no rituals or works involved.

So, the grace-faith system makes justification legally secure by the standard of divine justice, because what God alone does is perfect, and it cannot be overturned, because it is never contaminated by anything that man does. That's why this statement at the beginning of 16 is so tremendous. Therefore, on the basis of faith, that by grace it may be made sure: – it may be made certain. There'll be no overturning it. What God does is perfect. If you and I were involved in any way in providing something to salvation, it would not be perfect.

So, let's take water baptism. In a Roman Catholic Church, a baby is baptized in order to have his first step toward salvation. Without that baptism, that baby goes to hell. However, since the ritual is what gets you into heaven, the ritual, and how it is performed, must be performed in exactly the right way. Therefore, the priest has to take the baby, and he must pronounce the Latin words "Ego Te Baptizo:" "I baptize you" in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If he should inadvertently pronounce over that child some other statement, or say it in some wrong way (misstate the formula), the baptism is invalid, and the child goes to hell. At least they are consistent in saying that if we are going to add human works, these human works must be performed according to a specific prescribed way. The must be exactly perform. And if that's the case, you're never sure that somebody didn't miss the boat?

I actually baptized the lady one day, years ago, and I called her by the wrong name. I baptized her by the wrong name, and I gave her Mrs. Holt's name. Now you see, that lady's destiny is all shot. If just the ritual, in being done precisely, is important (which it is if it's going to be human works), then it's very critical that the human element doesn't mess up anywhere along the line, so that anything that's involved on the part of human works will make it certain that salvation cannot be a legally guaranteed secure thing. You could not use the Greek word "bebaios" about justification if it was not a program that only God was involved in.

Remember that you are not involved in any part of salvation, except just to take it. As most men are not involved in any part of the meals that they eat at their house, except to eat them. The gift of the dinner is offered. Their wife has done the preparing, and they are just on the receiving end. That's what God does in salvation. If most men were involved in preparing the meal, there'd be a lot of contamination in the process. There'd be a lot of lousing up of the supper, I guarantee you. And God knows the same thing. So, only He is involved in orders that God says, "I do it this way so that I'll make it absolutely certain.

Remember that we've already looked in the book of Galatians, and we've seen that the promise to Abraham was a promise that involves salvation personally to Abraham and to his posterity, as well as all these earthly promises to the Jewish people. They're involved. We're not involved in the earthly Jewish kingdom promises. We are involved in the promises of salvation. That's Paul's point. All of these promises have been made certain to Abraham and to his posterity because God alone made the provision for it.

So, God said, "I have to do it on this basis of faith, that, by grace. Then there can be no doubt that My verdict that, you were justified, can never be reversed. It is absolutely certain." So, that makes it legally secure, because justification is a legal act of God.

**Eternal Security**

The grace / faith system, therefore, is the basis of our eternal security. People may say, "I can lose my salvation." And you say, "Why?" And they say, "Well, because I might sin terribly. I might be guilty of a gross sin. They're right, because what they're telling you is that: "My salvation is based partly on what I can do. And if it is partly based on what you did, you can lose it. In fact, you will be sure to lose it. If it's partly on the basis of how secure your faith is, and how confident your faith is in God all the time, you'll lose it. You're consistent in saying that. But God says that salvation is based on neither of those. So, this system makes for eternal security.

That's why we can read, in John 10:27-30, verses such as this: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life. And they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand" (including yourself). My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Now, if those mean anything, they mean that once you're saved, you're always say. Why can you say that? Because God's legal declaration of a verdict of justification was based upon what He provided you with, not what you were involved in in providing for yourself.

So, if salvation is in any degree dependent on the merit; the goodness; the works; or, the stability in faith of man, it could never be attained, let alone retained. It could never be attained, let alone retained, if it was dependent on any of these things.

So, unless you are saved by grace alone, you are not save. That is, of course, what grace means: grace always stands alone. Unless you are saved by grace alone, there is no salvation at all. The only kind of salvation that God offers is this by-grace-alone kind. And the reason he does that, He says, is to make it "bebaios" – to make it secure and certain to the individual that you will never lose it again.

**Assurance of Salvation**

There is no assurance that anybody is going to heaven apart from this grace / faith method. If you are going to heaven on some other basis, which would be your works, then you never know that you've got enough works, and that you've got the right kind of works. If you're going there on the basis of how strong your faith is, you're never sure at any moment that your faith is big enough, and that your faith is secure enough. A sinner can never know where he stands on that basis.

**Propitiation**

However, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is a finished work. That's the point. What did He say? He said, "It is finished." The whole program of salvation was finished. That meant that payment was made in full for every one's sin. God is propitiated. When God says, "It is finished," that means there is nothing left to do about salvation. Therefore, there's nothing for you or me to do as sinners. We have nothing more to do for what? To propitiate the justice of God. Why would you provide works for salvation? In order to satisfy God's wrath against you? But the Bible says that Christ's work on the cross was finished. All of the wrath of God was satisfied. And we studied the doctrine of propitiation. So, what on earth can works provide? The only purpose of works is to remove wrath of God from you, so that He doesn't send you to hell. Well, if the work is finished, how is there anything for the human work to satisfy? What is there to satisfy? Nothing.

People do not understand all the relevant doctrines that are interrelated here, and so they speak like fools when they talk about losing their salvation, and when they talk about providing something by their efforts. So, it's possible for a believing sinner to be both saved and secure. If anybody is uncertain about his salvation here today, I can guarantee you that it's because you're looking on your works rather than upon the finished work of Christ. If you are looking upon your provision in God's eyes, then you're not going to be sure where you're going. But if you're looking to the finished work of Christ, you know you've got it made.

**What is a Human Work?**

This brings up one other point that we should look at, and that is: what constitutes human works? What constitutes the works which God says that He excludes from payment for sin? A minister this week said water baptism is not a human work. He agreed that the Lord's Supper is a human work. He agreed that circumcision is a human work. He agreed that the sacrifice of the Old Testament were human works. He agreed that all the rituals of the Old Testament were a human work. But when it came to water baptism, he says, "No, that's not a human work." So, when you run into people like this, their souls are now in serious jeopardy. Their eternity, if they really believe that, we will inevitably be hell. Therefore, you should know at least how to give them a little sense; a little word of warning; and, a little direction of understanding as to what God means when He speaks about works.

A human work is very simply what a human being can do, whether he's a believer or a nonbeliever. That is what a human work is. A work is simply what a human being (a believer or an unbeliever) can do. The word "works" should always be associated with the word "doing." When God speaks about works, He's talking about doing.

Therefore, for example, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a human work. Why? Because a human being cannot do that. But when you come to water baptism, that is a human work. Why? Because a human being, whether he's a believer or nonbeliever, can perform the work of water baptism. And throughout the Scripture, you will see that there are things which only God can do. Those are not human works. But throughout Scripture, you have a multitude of things that a human being can do, and those are works.

Now, whatever God commands to be done in the form, say, of a religious ritual in order to picture a spiritual truth, even that which God commands to be done is a work. Why? Because a human being can do it. That's why Paul, as you have seen in our studies here, has said, man's circumcision is a human work. That's why it won't get you into heaven. As a matter of fact, if you throw it into the pot for salvation, it'll keep you out of heaven. And in the New Testament church, the legalists we're going around telling the gentiles, "If you're not circumcised according to the Law of Moses, you're not going to heaven." What were they saying? "Unless you perform this human work, you will not go to heaven." Their point was that God has commanded us to do this, and that's why we must do this. Therefore, a human work includes everything of the Mosaic Law: the sacrifices; the ceremonies; and, the circumcision. In our day, it includes the Lord's Supper and it includes water baptism, because all of these things believers and unbelievers can do. Therefore, they are works.

As a matter of fact, everything in the Mosaic Law was commanded by God, as you know. And yet, that whole system was called (in the book of Galatians, by the apostle Paul) a works system. There is a critical verse. Make a note of this one. Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law." Now, what on earth is that? It is the Mosaic Law, and it is called a works system. Why? Because God did not command it? Of course, God commanded it – everything in the Mosaic Law. God told the Jews, "You do these things, and you must do these things." Not only were they do it, they had to do these things: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law."

These were things that God commanded, and yet, they are called works: "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 no flesh be justified." So, get this first located in your mind: Galatians 2:16. It will help you perhaps to get a person to understand that he's very, very wrong when he tries to claim that water baptism is not a human work. It is a human worth simply because people can do it. That's what constitutes a work.

So, any claim that a church ordinance (water baptism, or the Lord's Supper) is not a human work – that's utterly false. It's a deliberate, non-biblical assumption. When you come to the Bible, you look at Galatians 2:6, and you say, "Aha. Even though God commanded it, and it was prescribed (it was required), if people could do it, it still was a work. Therefore, it had a different purpose – not salvation.

We won't get into it here, but any verses that seemingly require water baptism for salvation – they're utterly wrong. That is the other argument you'll get – that some verses seemingly require water baptism for salvation. Such verses are really no problem at all when you analyze them from what the Greek is saying, and you match them up to the rest of the teaching of Scripture.

So, works neutralize grace so that salvation is not merely uncertain, but it is actually impossible.

Paul says, in verse 16, "Therefore, of faith, that by grace, for the purpose that the promise (which included salvation) might absolutely be sure. To whom? It says, "To all." This is the word "pas," which means all races of human beings, particularly to the seed (the "sperma"), which refers here to the spiritual posterity of Abraham which was described up in verse 13. Abraham is the spiritual father of all believing Jews and gentiles. Verses 11-12 have taught us that in this chapter. Abraham is the racial father, however, of the Jews only. And part of the promise given in Genesis 12 had to do with Jews only – people who have in their bodies the genetic structure from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have special promises that are to them only, and not to the gentiles. Abraham is not our father in reference to these national Jewish promise. Let me put it that way. Only to the racial Jews is that true.

However, he is speaking here about sea in terms of spiritual sea. And the seed of Abraham is defined: It says, "Not to that only which is of the Law.” "Not" is the Greek word "ou," which is the strong negative. "Only" is "monon," referring to a certain group. "Which is" is the proposition "ek," which means "out from." It is not to a certain limited category, which is "out from Law." Here's our word "nomos." This time it has the definite article. It says, "*The Law* in the Greek. Therefore, it is indicating the Mosaic Law. And who is the Mosaic Law group? Well, obviously, that is referring to the Jewish people. Those who are the Mosaic Law are those who up in verse 12 are called "the circumcision." This group of Jewish believers has a physical, but also a spiritual, relationship to Abraham.

So, it is saying that Abraham's spiritual seed is going to have this salvation made absolutely certain to it by the grace / faith method. This includes the Jewish part of his seed, but not to them only. This is very emphatic. It is not only Jews: "But ('alla')" introduces a contrasting group. It says, "Also ('kai')" – in addition. "Which is" is again the word "ek:" out from another category; namely, believing gentiles, which are described as out from faith ("pistis"). This is the group which is trusting: "in the tradition of Abraam's (in the tradition of Abraham's) faith. For this reason, you have two groups of spiritual posterity: Jews, who by faith are saved; and, gentiles, who by faith are saved. To both groups, this salvation (this justification) is made absolutely certain. The verdict cannot be overturned because of the method by which God provided it.

Therefore, Abraham, who is the great historical example of faith in the Old Testament, is said to be the father of us all. "He is" is the Greek word "eimi." It is present tense. He always is. It is active. This is true of Abraham himself directly. He is the father ("pater"), which here means the spiritual progenitor. "He is the father of us;" that is, the father of all of us. The word "all" is Pas, which means every born-again person. Every human being of all races who are believers are children of Abraham in the Kingdom of God. Why? Because they follow Abraham's example of believing God's promise.

God has promised you eternal life on the basis of the provision of His Son Jesus Christ. God's justice has been propitiated (satisfied) against you. God has no more problems with you. He has no more wrath to deliver to you. The only wrath that God is going to put upon you is if you insist on trying to be saved by works.

Once you're a believer, Jewish or gentile, you are now in the category of great divine blessing, and you'll bring God's wrath upon you on the basis of your personal sin. Unless you repent, as per 1 John 1:9; make confession to Him; turn yourself around; and, get out of the pigsty of the sins of this world, then you will have the wrath of God indeed upon you instead of His blessing. But the Bible says that you'll still go to heaven. But you'll go to heaven poor for all eternity instead of enriched by rewards.

So, this verse tells us that justification is make certain to Jew and gentile believers by grace, through faith, apart from all human works. That is the source of fantastic comfort and relief.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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