

How God Saved Abraham

Romans 4:1-16

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Tonight we come to Romans 4, and we're going to look at the subject again of justification by faith. We're going to look at it from a very interesting angle, that is, the angle of how God saved or justified Old Testament saints. The reason why Paul uses Old Testament saints, specifically Abraham, is because the Jews would always look to Abraham as being a man who was justified by his good deeds or by his rites or rituals or by his religion. Paul is going to make it very clear that the principle of justification by faith is not new. Now, you've heard me say it a thousand times, and this will be a thousand and one, if it's new...it's not true, if it's true...it's not new. Justification by faith is not new, and because it's not new it's true. We're going to see some marvelous truths tonight on how God saves sinners and how He justifies the ungodly.

One of my favorite Bible commentaries was written by a man named H.A. Ironside. The initials stand for Harry Allen Ironside. For many years he was the pastor of Moody Bible Church in Chicago. I say many years because he died in 1952, so many of you may not know him or know about him. The story is told of Dr. Ironside, while on vacation, went to visit another church. When I'm on vacation, I will go visit other churches, and I'll slip in the back or sit in the pew. It's a little bit difficult for me, I must admit—God help me, but I'm always critiquing and analyzing the preaching. Is it Biblical? Does it stick with the text? Is it communicating the Word of God, stuff like that. So, I run into churches a lot of times where I'll sit and listen and will want to yell or scream or run out or something like that. Sometimes they'll read a verse...I was in a church one time where he read a verse, and the preacher started talking and never said anything about the verse he just read. I wanted to stand up and say, "What happened to your text?"

Anyway, let's get back to Dr. Ironside. He went into a Sunday school class...now, if I were a Sunday school teacher and Harry Allen Ironside came into my class I'd freak out, but evidently this Sunday school teacher didn't know who he was. The Sunday school teacher asked the class a question, a valid question that's going to be answered tonight by the way in our text, and that question is: How did God save people in the Old Testament? How did God save people before Jesus died and rose again? It's a question that I've been asked quite a bit. Well, one of the students in the Sunday school class raised his hand and said, "God saved people by the keeping of the law." The teacher said, "Yes, that's right! Very good answer, that's right." Harry Ironside, hearing that answer, raised his hand at the back of the class and said, "But my Bible says that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." So, the teacher was caught off guard for a minute and said, "Oh, well, I guess you're not saved by the law. Does anyone else have an answer on how God saves Old Testament saints?" Someone else raised their hand and said, "Well, in the Old Testament, they were saved by bringing sacrifices. They had to bring a lamb or a sacrifice, and that's how they were saved." The teacher said, "Yes, that's right! That's very good. That's a good answer." Again, Harry Ironside raised his hand. He said, "But, my Bible says that by the blood of bulls and goats that no one can be forgiven, no

one can be justified." By this time the teacher figures, I've got somebody in the class that knows their Bible better than I do, and he shared with Dr. Ironside, "Well, Sir, maybe you can tell us how God saved sinners in the Old Testament." Ironside answered very quickly. He said, "The same way God saves sinners in the New Testament today, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ." That's how God saves sinners. He did it that way in the Old Testament, and He does it that way in the New Testament. God doesn't change. God doesn't have a way to get to heaven in the Old Testament and a way to get to heaven in the New Testament and a way to get to heaven somewhere else. God is consistent with if you want to get to heaven, you can't go around the cross. It must be by grace alone in faith alone in Christ alone. Amen?

We're going to find the answer to that question dealt with in this fourth chapter of Romans. Now we've seen "Condemnation" in chapter one, "The whole world guilty before God." We've seen "Salvation" in Chapter 3, "How God justifies the wicked and the unrighteous," and now we're going to see justification illustrated in the life of Abraham. Paul makes four assertions about Abraham's justification in chapter 4. They are, (we aren't going to cover them all tonight, we are going to cover the first three) 1. God justified Abraham by faith, not works, verses 1-8. 2. By faith, not rites, rituals or ordinances, verses 9-12; 3. By faith, not law, verses 13-16. Next Wednesday night we'll look at 4. By faith in God's promise, verses 17-25. It's interesting that as you come to chapter 4, Paul is going to pick up with the questions he asked at the end of chapter 3. What questions did he ask at the end of chapter 3? Let me point them out to you. In Romans 3:27 he says "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." The first thing he is going to say about Abraham was that Abraham is justified by faith. I want you to notice the second question in verse 29, "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Paul is going to show that Abraham was justified not by rites or rituals, which would pertain only to the Jew and not to the Gentile. The third question he brought up at the end of chapter 3, verse 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." That is the purpose of the law, and he is going to answer that in chapter 4, verses 13-16, by showing Abraham was saved by faith not by the law. So, we are going to see that justification is no novelty. It is seen clearly in Old Testament history.

The first thing that he says in verses 1-8 is Abraham was justified by faith, not by works. Let's read verses 1-8 of chapter 4. He says, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God..., that's a synonym for faith. Abraham trusted God. Abraham believed God. Abraham put his faith in God. In verse 3, "...it was reckoned...", or counted or imputed "...unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth...", or reckons, "...righteousness without works...", again, he's not saved by his works, "...7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute...", again, or reckon iniquity or, "...sin." Go back with me to verse 1. He says, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as

pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" Why would Paul use Abraham as an example of justification by faith? Very simply, no one more important in the mind of a Jew than Abraham, Father Abraham. Many feel that next to Jesus Christ, Abraham could be thought of as perhaps one of the greatest individuals in the entire Bible. I know Moses is great. King David was great, and all the prophets, Elijah, Isaiah and all the great people in the Old Testament, but Abraham stands kind of head and shoulders above them all. He is a prototype of how God saves sinners, and that you need to be very clear on. He sets the standard. He gives us the way God saves sinners.

Many times in the Bible, when you find a word first mentioned or a truth first mentioned, it sets the stage for how that word or truth or doctrine or spiritual concept is to be understood all the way through the whole Bible. Some call it "The Law of First Mention," and in this case it holds true. Here we're going to see God justifying Abraham, and so Paul is going to give us a lock-tight argument that Abraham is not justified by his works, by his rites, or by law. If God saved Abraham that way, then it is consistent that that's the way God is going to save everyone. In the mind of the Jew, Abraham was a righteous man. They actually said in their Mishnah, and other Jewish writings, that Abraham was keeping the law before the law was ever given, that Abraham was righteous before God even made him righteous, and the reason why God gave Abraham promises and did things for Abraham was because he was a righteous man. That is not what the Bible actually teaches. We need to be careful that we don't interpret Abraham as being a righteous man—therefore God made him promises, or God justified him because he kept the law, or he was circumcised, or anything like that. Technically, Abraham was a Gentile before he became a Jew.

The first Jew was Abraham, and he was a pagan Gentile before he was a Jew. You say, "Run that by me again?" Abraham was living in paganville, Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham grew up, I don't know about him, but all of his family, his father, his mother, his cousins, his uncles they worshiped the moon. They all worshiped the moon, and they were pagans. God (this has always been one of the most mind-blowing ideas to me), that God in His sovereign grace, would reach down to a man by the name of, at this time his name was Abram later changed to Abraham, and reveal Himself. You see, God cannot be known apart from revelation. You can't find God by searching. God must make Himself known. So, in the midst of all this paganism, in the midst of all this darkness, God in His sovereign grace picked this guy named Abram, and chose him that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. Even the Arab nations look to Abraham, even Muslims look to Abraham. Jews, Muslims and Christians all look back to Father Abraham. It all started with Abraham. God came to Abraham and revealed Himself. He told him to go into a land that He would show him, made him promises and covenants, all kinds of cool stuff, and I'm sure that Abraham kind of looked around and thought, "Why me, Lord? Why would You come to me? Why would You pick me?"

Now, Abraham was a sinner like any other human being on planet earth. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That would include Abraham, so we need to understand that Abraham wasn't picked or chosen or saved or justified because he was anything special. It was the grace of God. Salvation has its origin in God Himself. I feel the same way about my

salvation, and the same thing is true about your salvation. "Why would God save me? Why would God save me? Why would God open my eyes? Why would God convict me of sin? Why would God bring me to Revival to hear the gospel, and I would repent and be saved? Why would my coworker be a Christian and tell me about Jesus? Why was I born in a Christian home? Why did I learn about Jesus in Sunday school? Why was I born in America and not a pagan nation? Why do I know about God as He has revealed Himself in His Word? Why me?" And there is no answer to that. If you say, "That's because God saw deep, deep down in my heart I'm really a good person." And, deep, deep down in your heart you're really deceived because that's not it at all. "Well, God really knew that I had lots of talents and abilities, and He needed me on His team, so He saved me." The Bible says God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. You say, "Wow, God really chose me!" You're just saying, "I was a fool," and God looked at me and said, "Now there's a candidate for My glory. If I save that person and use that person people are going to know it's God, and I'll get the credit." The amazing grace of God, it's all God's grace and to Him be the glory, great things He has done!

Anyway, I spent a little too much time on why Paul used Abraham in verse 1 as his example. It's because there's no one greater than Abraham. Basically, what he is saying, if I were to paraphrase verse 1, was how was Abraham saved? How was Abraham saved? What pertaining to the flesh did Abraham find? Or, how in his flesh was Abraham saved? Then he says in verse 2, verses 1 and 2 are just setting the stage for the argument begins in verse 3, he says, "If Abraham..." this is a hypothetical kind of a case, "...if Abraham were justified..." remember that means to be declared righteous, not made righteous but declared righteous, this is our standing before God, "...by works..." then he had a basis for glorying, but not before God. If Abraham worked to be saved or there was something good in Abraham that caused God to save him, then Abraham could boast or Abraham could glory, but he could not boast or glory before God.

Now, just a quick footnote, and that is in the book of James in the New Testament. James mentions that Abraham is an example of justification by works. Many people see a contradiction there between the clear teaching of Romans by Paul the apostle, and the teaching in the book of James where it says that Abraham was justified by works. Now, I'll try to make it quick, short, and to the point to explain this. That is, when Paul is writing about justification and using Abraham as an example, he is talking about justification before God. When James talks about justification, he's talking about justification before people, before men. People see that you are saved by the way that you live. When Paul talks about justification, he's talking about our initial salvation which is by faith. When James talks about justification before people, he's talking about the fruit or evidence of our salvation, which is by the way we live out our lives. So, we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, but true salvation will produce works. That's what James is saying. If you're really saved, then it's going to manifest itself in your life. When James talks about justification before men, he uses the example of Abraham offering Isaac upon an altar. That was evidence of his salvation and of his faith. Paul doesn't use that here in Romans. Paul talks about Abraham just believing God and God imputing to Abraham righteousness based on his faith. So, there are two different issues. Paul and James are not fighting one another. They are standing back to back fighting different enemies; one is fighting

the enemy saying we are saved by good works, the other is fighting the enemy saying that we can be saved without showing good works in our life. So, you need to understand that. I just thought I'd mention that because many times people think that there's a contradiction between the book of Romans and the book of James.

If Abraham were justified by works he could boast, but he couldn't boast before God. Now, I want you to notice in verse 3 where Paul goes. He says, "What saith the scripture?" Do you see that? What says the scriptures? Now, I could stop right there and that could be it for the night. What saith the scriptures? This is the point I want to make. When there is an issue to be solved or resolved, where does Paul turn? Scriptures. Where should we turn? Scriptures. When someone says, "How is a person saved in the Old Testament?" What should we say? "What does the Bible say?" What saith the scriptures? "Can you go to heaven by being baptized?" What saith the scriptures? "Do you go to heaven by being good?" What saith the scriptures? "Is Jesus the only way to heaven?" What saith the scriptures? We should be going to the Word of God.

Everyone has a source of authority, everybody. Your source of authority might be your intellect—God have mercy on you. God has given us minds, and we should use our minds, but our minds must be subject to the authority of scriptures. My intellect is not the final court of appeal. When the Bible is clear, even if I don't understand it, I lean on the Bible not my understanding. Do you know why? Because I'm pretty dumb, and there's a lot I don't understand. My experience is not the authority. "Well, I know it's true!" How do you know? "Because I have goosebumps." A familiar statement by our friends who knock on our door from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints is, "I know that it's true because..." what, "I have a burning in my bosom." I ate a bunch of Mexican food last night. Your pastor right now has a burning in his bosom. It's a miracle I'm here tonight. It was good, and I was hungry and I ate too much, but a burning in your bosom is no basis of authority for truth. The Buddhist has a burning in his bosom, and Confucius has a burning in his bosom, and this person over here has a burning in their bosom, but what they believe is contradicting of one another. So, what's the final court of appeal? Who's going to tell us what is right or wrong? What saith the scriptures? What does the Bible say? Church tradition is not the authority. "This is the way it's been in history. This is church tradition." Our church dogma is not the authority. A preacher is not the authority. I'm not the authority. The Pope is not the authority. Priests are not the authority. The authority must be God's Word, and God's Word period.

Let me say one more thing and then I'll move on. That is, isn't it interesting that Paul phrases it, "What saith the scriptures?" Why doesn't he say, "What does God say?" Why does he say, "What does the scripture say," and why doesn't he say, "What does God say?" Do you want to know why? Because it's one in the same thing. When the scriptures speak, God speaks. When you say, "This is what the Bible says," guess what you're saying? This is what God says. That's why you hear me sometimes pray, "Lord, speak through what You've spoken." When God speaks in His Word, God is speaking, and so when Paul says, "What does the scriptures say?" He is in reality saying, "What does the Bible say? What does the scriptures say? What does God say? What does the Lord have to say in His Word?" All through the Bible you'll find

a repeated phrase and that is the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord." I love that. Thus saith the Lord. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.

Paul turns to the scriptures as his authority. He's quoting from Genesis 15:6, and you've got to write this down, Genesis 15:6. He quotes it there in verse 3, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Now, I've already taken more time with the first couple of verses than I wanted to, so we won't turn back to Genesis, but please write down Genesis 15 and read at least up to verse 6. It's one of the great, great chapters in the Bible. Here's what happens. Abraham has just rescued his nephew Lot from the five kings. He has over 300 men gathered. He went after his nephew and rescued him from the kings—swords and shields banging and clanging—and he won the battle and brought back the spoils. I picture it being evening, because he saw the stars. That evening he went to bed. Abraham is in his eighties. He's getting old, and he has no children. He and Sarah have not been able to have children. This is for many people one of the great heartbreaks of life. Abraham is lying there in his tent. He can't sleep that night, and God comes to him and says, "Abraham, I'm going to give you children, as many as the sands are on the sea and the stars are in heaven." Abraham kind of said, "Well, you know, what good will it do me? I have no children to give my inheritance to? I have a servant named Eliezer, and he'll get all my stuff, but what good does it do? I have no one to inherit my stuff?" And God told Abraham to come out of his tent. He took him out and said, "Look at the stars...", no smog, a clear night, "...look at the stars. Can you number them?" And Abraham says, "No. I can't number them." He says, "That's how many children you're going to have." He's 80. So, he says, "I have to sit down for a minute." He's thinking, "I'm going to have to put an addition on the tent." "That's how many kids you're going to have." No sooner had God made this promise to Abraham, that the Bible says these words, "And Abraham believed God and God...", here's our key word, we read it in our text, "...imputed...", or reckoned that to Abraham as righteousness. He imputed to Abraham righteousness because he believed God's promise. That is the foundation for justification by faith. God makes a promise, we believe what God says. Abraham, by faith, believed the promise that God made.

Now, in the Old Testament they would look forward to God's promise of Messiah. We look back to the coming of Messiah, but we still look back and we believe God's promise. Isn't it funny that we as Christians, that we believe that a man named Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross, was buried and rose from the dead. We've never seen Jesus. We've never shook His hand. We've never talked to any eyewitnesses. We've read about Him in the Bible, but we do what? We believe, and we believe that our sins are forgiven. We believe that we are children of God, and we believe that when we die we'll go to heaven...all on faith. A lot of people say, "Well, that's quite pie in the sky, and you Christians just make up your faith." (By the way, next Wednesday night we're going to go into great detail on the essence of faith and what real faith and saving faith is all about.) Faith isn't just psyching yourself up to believe what you want to believe and hope that it's real. Faith is based on an object. That's the object of Jesus, who died and rose again and God's objective truth in His Word. But, isn't it amazing how much faith we bank our eternity on? You're lying on your deathbed about ready to die, and you have this great assurance that I'm going to see God, I'm going to be with Jesus,

and it is well with my soul. That's faith. The Bible says, "The just shall live by faith." You don't have to torture yourself, "Have I been good enough? Have I done good deeds enough? Is God going to accept me? I don't know if I'm saved." We can have absolute assurance because it is not based on us, it's based on Jesus Christ and His finished work on that cross.

So, "Abraham..." Genesis 15:6 as quoted here in Romans 4:3, "...believed God..." and God counted, my King James has "counted." Now the word counted is also translated "imputed." I want you to look at verse 6, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness..." the very same Greek word translated in verse 3, "counted" is translated in verse 6, "imputed." Then, jump down to verse 8. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It's the very same Greek word, "imputed" or counted or reckon. You've got to understand this word beginning here in Romans, all the way through in the book of Romans, or you'll never understand how God justifies the unjust.

The word "imputed," or we use imputation, is a financial term. It is used for keeping financial records, bookkeeping. It's a banking, financial kind of a term to where it was used for when you would keep a record of your finances or you put money in deposit in a bank. You would deposit money in a bank, and they give you credit or record that you have so much money in the bank in your ledger. Or, you're keeping...I don't know how many of you people use checkbooks anymore. My wife and I have a checkbook, and we still use that, but people look at us like we crawled out of a cave somewhere. But, when it comes to finances and bookkeeping, especially bookkeeping, finances and ledgers have to be exact. Right? You can't round off figures, you know. Just round it up or round it down, it doesn't matter. You know it has to balance, right? When you balance your checkbook or your bank account, it needs to balance. It has to be down to the very penny. Everything has to be exact. Well, this is how it works with God. Our ledger, our account or record, was bankrupt. We had nothing in our account. We were completely bankrupt. God takes the ledger of Christ, the records of Christ or the account of Christ, and He takes His righteousness and He transfers His righteousness, as you would transfer money, from His account into your account. That which is transferred to your account is the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God, which is perfection, holiness. It's actually put into your account. That's how God sees you, no longer bankrupt or zero in your balance, but the whole righteousness of Christ is dropped into your account. Then He takes your bankrupt state, your zero account, and He transfers that over onto Christ when He suffered and died on the cross, so God gives to you. Imputation is God taking the righteousness of Christ and dropping it onto your side of the ledger in your account. Now, this is why God doesn't just make believe that you're righteous. You are righteous because when He opens the books and He sees the righteousness of Christ, that's what you have. Sometimes we get the idea that God just kind of passes over the fact that we are guilty sinners, and He kind of just, you know, calls us righteous, but we actually are! We were bankrupt, and God deposited money into our account.

I mean, if you had a bank account with hardly any in it, and somebody said, "I would like to deposit \$1 million into your bank account. I want to give it to you. It's going to be directly transferred, and it's yours and you can draw from it any way you want." What would you do?

"Hallelujah!" You wouldn't say, "No. I get my money the old fashioned way, I work for it." This is the mentality of our culture. "No thank you! No thank you! I get mine the hard, old good way where I earn my own money. I don't need any gifts." Hey, lay it on me. If you want to put \$1 million bucks in my bank account, have at it, man. I can dig that. And, when it comes to salvation, God wants to deposit into your account the righteousness of Christ, and here's what people say, "No. I'll go to heaven the old fashioned way, I'll work for it. I'm going to earn it. I'm going to deserve it. I'm going to work hard and get myself to heaven." It ain't going to happen. It's not going to happen. No one gets to heaven by their good works. The only way you can get to heaven is by having the righteousness of Christ "imputed." It's called the doctrine of imputation. It's reckoned or imputed to you, His righteousness. So, you stand in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, perfect and complete and accepted before God, which is an amazing, amazing amazing truth! That's your standing, or your justification before God, and that's clearly taught there in verse 3, "...counted unto him for righteousness."

Then he says in verse 4, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." So, if you want to work for it, if you want to get it the hard way, the old fashioned way, then it's not grace, but it is debt. If you work for an employer, and you put in your hours, then he actually owes you that money. If you have worked a 40-hour week and you get paid X amount of dollars for the hours you worked, then it's not a gift. It's owed you. So, if you work for salvation, it's no longer a gift if you have to be good enough or baptized or rites or rituals. It's not a gift. There's no mixing of grace and works. It's either all of grace or all of works. You can't mix the two together. Some people think we're saved by grace, but we have to work for it as well. It's the grace of God that we work for rather than understanding that grace must stand alone. It's either reckoned of grace or of debt. "But..." the contrast, verse 5, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." So, by believing or by faith, we can be justified, and notice in verse 5, this is absolutely mind-blowing, who does God justify? The ungodly. His faith is reckoned, or counted or imputed, there's that word, for righteousness. I want you to see, especially in verse 5, who God justifies. The answer is the ungodly, which is guess who? Everyone. Abraham is not excluded. God justifies the ungodly. What an amazing thing that is!

Look at Romans 5:6. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time..." just in the right time, "...Christ died for..." who? "...the ungodly." Who's that? Everyone. No one is excluded. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so no one is saved by their good works. We're all ungodly, but the glorious truth of the scriptures is that God justifies the ungodly. Amazing! Now, he calls on David, who is quoted as writing Psalm 32:1-2. It's not about David, it's still about Abraham, but David had the same experience. "Even as David also describeth..." this is King David, "...the blessedness of the man, unto whom God..." and here's our word again, "...imputeth..." or reckons, "...righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man..." or person, "...to whom the Lord will not..." here's the word again, "...impute sin." Now, he's quoting David from Psalm 32:1-2. In that Psalm, which is a penitential Psalm, David is repenting over his sin with Bathsheba. David had broken God's commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," and he coveted another man's wife. David broke the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery,"

and he committed adultery. Thirdly, David broke the commandment, "Thou shalt not murder," and he murdered Uriah her husband. Then, after a year when Nathan the prophet visited him, David repented, turned back to God and cried out to God and said, "I've sinned." God forgave him of his sin. David penned Psalm 32 as well as Psalm 51, and David said, "Oh, how happy, oh how blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven. Those to whom God does not impute unrighteousness." Their sins are covered. "Blessed..." verse 8, "...is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." What a marvelous truth that is! David experienced this imputation of righteousness, this forgiveness, in his own sin as he turned to God, and God forgave him of his own sin.

Here's the thing you need to understand. Abraham received this righteousness from God 14 years before he was circumcised and fulfilled that covenant that God gave him, verses 9-12. I want to read it, follow with me. "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?" This is a reference to the Jews and the Gentiles; the uncircumcision are the Gentiles, circumcision are the Jews. Does this justification by faith, is it only for the Jews or is it just for the Gentiles? Was Abraham reckoned, or forgiven, righteous by circumcision? Notice verse 10, "How was it then reckoned?" or imputed to him, "...when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." I'm going to ask you to quote this passage to me after church tonight. I want you to put it to memory. Here it is real simple: Was Abraham justified before God because he had fulfilled this rite of circumcision? The answer: No. It happened 14 years after Genesis 15. God declared Abraham righteous in Genesis 15. In Genesis 17, Abraham received the seal or the evidence of the righteousness he possessed by the rite of circumcision. So, we're not saved by works, verses 1-8, and we're not saved by rites or rituals.

Now, how does that apply to us today just in that simple point? We're not saved by baptism. You know, this is a big question a lot of people ask. "Do you have to be baptized to be saved?" I'm asked that all the time. "Do I have to be baptized to be saved?" People ask me, "I was baptized as a kid, then I got saved. Is it okay to get baptized again?" Go ahead. You can get baptized all you want. Baptism doesn't save you. Now, I don't mean to belittle baptism. I think it's important. It's a rite, but baptism is an outward showing of an inward reality. Baptism is an outward declaration of your identification and your death with Christ. Baptism does not save you. Confirmation does not save you. Communion does not save you. You can be confirmed. You can be baptized. You can take communion, and unless you've been born again, you're not going to heaven. It's like having a...I don't know if I should use this illustration, I might offend some people, but I guess I've already offended everybody anyway. The Bible uses the example of the pig that has returned to its mud, wallowing in the mud. You can take a pig out of the pigpen, and you can wash and clean it shiny clean. You can put a little curl in its hair, you know, and put a bow on it. You put a little pig tuxedo on it and spray some Chanel No. 5 to make it

smell good. You can get it all spruced up smelling good. What do you have? A good-looking, good-smelling pig, right? You haven't changed his nature. The minute you let that pig go, where's it going to go in its tuxedo? Into the mud because it's still a pig! So, you have to have your nature changed. We have a lot of people who go to church, and they're like the pig all dressed up but not going to heaven. "Well, I've been baptized." "I've been confirmed," or "I take communion," or "I'm born in this religion," or "I'm of this faith." It's not a rite. It's not a ritual. It's not a religion. It's not a race. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, "You need to be born again." Paul the apostle in Philippians 3 said, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ."

If you master this argument in Romans 4, taken from Abraham, you could talk to a religious person, people who think they go to heaven by being good, and show them God's principles haven't changed. God doesn't save people by works. God doesn't save people by rites or rituals. If anyone can get to heaven by being good it would've been Abraham. Now, there's a third thing and we'll just touch it real quickly and then I'll make some closing application. That is, we're not saved by the law. We're not saved by the law, verses 13-16. It says, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world..." now he is alluding to Genesis 12, "...was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect..." or it's worthless, "...15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16 Therefore..." this is the conclusion, "...it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure..." I love that. If we're saved by works or by the law or by rites, then it would be tenuous, we couldn't be sure that we would make it to heaven. "...to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all," so even Jews have to be saved by God's grace through faith in Christ alone. It's the only way God saves anyone. There is only one way to be saved, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It's not by law. It's either law or grace, therefore, it's faith that it might be by grace. Grace not race and grace not place. God doesn't save you because you are an American. I've met people, "Are you a Christian?" "Why sure! I'm an American! I got a flag on my house. I'm an American. I'm going to heaven. All Americans go to heaven." We're so confused on how a person is saved. Just as Abraham was circumcised 14 years after he was declared righteous, the law was given 430 years after Abraham was declared righteous. The law was given 430 years after Abraham was declared to be righteous by God.

Now, let me summarize what we've covered tonight. 1. We learned the importance of the scripture being the authority. How do we get to heaven? How does God save sinners? What saith the Bible, right? Not, what saith the church or what saith my friends, but what saith the scriptures? What does the Bible teach? 2. We learned the hopelessness of trying to be saved by good works. If Abraham, this great, great man, was not saved by works or by rites or rituals, then what makes us think that we can be saved by rites or rituals or by works? The law cannot save us. Rituals cannot save us. Faith alone can save us. 3. This is interesting. We learn here the proof of Christianity's validity and finality. Now, this is subtle, but it is a profound thought. I said, as I opened up the teaching tonight, if it's new it's not true...If it's true it's not new. When Jesus Christ appeared for the first time, born of Mary the virgin of Bethlehem, was

he bringing in a new system of salvation called Christianity? Was he bringing in a new religion of Christianity? No. It started all the way back in the garden of Eden, all the way back with Abraham, all the way through the Old Testament. Here's the point. In the history of mankind, God's method of saving people has never, ever ever changed. It's always been by faith, it's never changed. God doesn't whimsically just change His idea. So, all these other religions that have sprung up in the history of time and mankind are false. Every other religious system says that you must do something to be saved. You know, it all boils down to this, you either save yourself or God saves you. You either save yourself by being a good person, by going to church, by joining an organization, by getting baptized, by shaving your head, by not eating certain foods, or God saves you by His grace. Do you know that God doesn't need any help saving you. You did the sinning, He does the saving. Christianity goes all the way back to the Old Testament, all the way back through the Old Testament. It's not new. It's not a new method. It's not a new revelation. It's being witnessed by the law and the prophets as Paul said in Romans 3.

God foretold prophecy. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, what's the first thing God did for them? He killed an animal and made them clothes. Do you know that's a picture? They tried to sew fig leaves...scratchy, itchy, dorky-looking fig leaves. It doesn't cut it. They hid in the garden until God came. God realized that they sinned, and they were exposed. God had to kill an animal—for the wages of sin is death. Then, God provided the skins to clothe Adam and Eve. So, Jesus died to clothe us in His righteousness. Jesus died and shed His blood so that we could be forgiven. Then, all the way through the Old Testament, scarlet thread. Every time a lamb was slain, every rite or ritual, it was all pointing to the cross of Jesus Christ. Everything in the tabernacle, everything in the priesthood, all pointing to Jesus Christ. Jesus is all through the Old Testament. When He met the two on the road to Emmaus, He went back to the law and the prophets, the Psalms and showed them all the Messianic prophecies, all the places Messiah would come, suffer and die. It's not new and therefore it's true. It's not new...therefore it's true! Christianity isn't some last-minute kind of invention that Jesus started a new movement and we're trying to keep the ball rolling here. It's rooted in the very redemptive plan of God. Someone said, "Cut the Bible anywhere, it bleeds, it's red with redemptive truth." That's why we can never stop singing about the blood of Jesus, thankful for the cross of Jesus, thankful that through His sacrifice and His death on the cross, we can be forgiven.

Jesus is the object of our faith. He is the foundation of our hope, and we are declared righteous. God takes the righteousness of Christ and He deposits it into our spiritual bank account. He took my sin and gave it to Jesus Christ, and it was nailed to the cross. He paid for it, and because of that it's sure. I can have the assurance that I'll go to heaven. Not because of what I am, not because of what I do, not because of my goodness. "I'm going to go to heaven because I was baptized." "I'm going to go to heaven because I have a Christian haircut." "I'm going to heaven because I go to Revival on Wednesday nights." "I'm going to heaven because of Jesus Christ!" Amen? Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Are you clinging to Christ alone tonight? Do you think you're going to get to heaven because you are somebody special? We've all sinned. God provided a Savior. In faith, open your heart and

receive Him, in Jesus name. Let's pray.