

## **Abraham--Justified by Faith, Part 2**

Romans 4:3

45-35

We're going to talk about Jesus, the Savior divine, the fountain, the water of life in terms of Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 4. While you're turning to Romans 4, let me just say that I am spending some time in this section carefully going through chapter 3 and 4, and I'm sure we'll do the same in chapters 5 and 6, because it is essential that we be very clear about the doctrine of salvation. If there is one doctrine which the enemy would desire to attack, which would ultimately damn men, it would be to attack the doctrine of salvation. If Satan can foul us up on how to be saved, then he has damned our souls.

So, it is essential that we understand clearly this truth. The systems of religion which engulf the world — whether you're talking about liberal Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, or a multitude of contemporary cults, Hinduism, Buddhism, whatever it is, Islam — any religion of the world endeavors to obviate the clear teaching of the Bible on how men are saved and to substitute a false doctrine. And so we can't spend too much time making clear the teaching of Romans 3 and 4. This particular section of Scripture has been the very personal study of Bible teachers and commentators and men and women of God for centuries since it was written, and still yields fresh insight to those who study it.

Now, in chapter 3 verses 21 to 31, Paul ably articulated the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. And that is a byword for the heart of the Christian religion. We believe that salvation comes by grace through faith. Now Paul has laid that out in terms of its theology in chapter 3, and now in chapter 4 he illustrates it. Not only does he illustrate it but he expands off of that illustration and enhances the teaching of chapter 3.

Now, he picks out one primary illustration of salvation by faith through grace, and that is the man Abraham, who is the father of the nation Israel. He is the illustration. And as we saw last week, there are very many reasons why he has been chosen as that illustration. The whole fourth chapter is about Abraham. It begins about Abraham and it really ends about Abraham, and everything in between, with the exception of a short digression relative to David. But Abraham is the illustration. He was God's specially chosen man. Through his loins would come the Messiah, He is the model of faith. He is the model of the right kind of approach to God. He is the model of true salvation. This man Abraham could demand our study for months and years, but suffice it to say, very briefly, that there are a couple of things that help us to get a perspective on Abraham.

First, he is very frequently in the Bible called "the friend of God," the friend of God. Second Chronicles chapter 20, Isaiah chapter 41, James chapter 2, Abraham is called the friend of God. That's a marvelous designation. In fact, several times in the Scripture, God, who is the creator of the universe and the creator of all men, is called "the God of Abraham," as if being the God of Abraham was being something special. More than twelve chapters in Genesis are devoted to the life of this

man.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul talks about him. The writer of Hebrews talks about him. And James talks about him. And all of them use him as an illustration of salvation by grace through faith.

Now, his story begins in Genesis chapter 12 and I'm going to ask you, if you will, to turn to it for a brief time tonight, Genesis chapter 12. Now here we find God choosing Abraham. Now Abraham lived in a city called Ur, U-r, very short name.

It was a busy city. As best archaeologists can identify, the city probably had about 300 thousand inhabitants. It was a commercial city, a very important city located in Mesopotamia which is on the Persian Gulf, in those days located in the area of two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Archaeologists, in dealing with this ancient site, have told us that it probably located itself in about four square miles of area. They also have determined that the people, for the most part, were highly educated, very proficient in math, proficient in astronomy, adept at weaving and engraving, and commonly wrote. That is they had reduced their language to writing even in the time of Abraham by the twelfth chapter of Genesis, and in writing they put their writing down on clay tablets.

They worshiped multiplied gods. They were what we call "polytheistic." They had many gods, the foremost of which was a god by the name of Nanna, N-a-n-n-a, who was the moon god. Now Abraham's father's name was Terah, T-e-r-a-h, and according to Joshua 24:2 he was an idolatrous man. He worshiped idols. So, Abraham was raised in a pagan environment. He was raised in an important, educated kind of place, a place of some importance, a place where there may have been effective trades as well as splendid agriculture. But he was raised a pagan. He was raised in a family where they worshiped idols.

God came to this man Abraham in the midst of his pagan environment and He called to him to follow a new path. He said to him, "Abraham, I want you to leave everything." Notice verse 1: "The Lord said to Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee and in thee (or through thee) shall all families of the earth be blessed.'"

Now, this is a sovereign call. We don't know any preliminary information about Abraham really, except as chapter 11 verse 27 tells us, he was begotten by Terah. We really don't know much about him, but God called him. And people have often asked the question why. And the answer is because God is God and He calls whomever He wants. And He called Abraham and if He had called somebody else, we would have asked the same question with the same answer. Now God promised him three things: land, verse 1; seed, verse 2, a nation; blessing, verse 3. A land, a nation, blessing. And God said through him would come the hope of salvation for the world. Through his loins all families of the earth would be blessed. And so today, we who are saved, we who know salvation in Jesus Christ, according to Galatians 3:9 are blessed with Abraham the believer. We have been blessed because the seed came through his loins.

Now what was his response? Verse 4, very matter of fact: "So Abram departed." He just packed up and left; instantaneous obedience. He responded to the sovereign call of God. By the way, he was about 60 years of age. He was making, or was to make, by God's call, a complete break with his

lifestyle, his career — whatever that might have been — his possessions, his friends, his relatives, his religion. Look at verse 1: Get out of thy country, leave thy kindred, get out of thy father's house. Now that is a very far-reaching, sweeping kind of directive. And he responded, "as the Lord had spoken unto him."

Look at verse 4, "and Lot went with him." I believe that that was a hedge against the will of God. God said get out of there and leave your kindred. And Lot went with him and became a serious problem. Now when he first left, he didn't fully obey God. Back up to chapter 11 verse 31. "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldeans, to go to the land of Canaan and they came to Haran and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were 205 years; and Terah died in Haran." And then verse 4 of chapter 12, "And Abram was 75 years old when he departed out of Haran."

Now, I want you to get the picture. God said, leave your father's house and leave your kindred and get out of this place and go to a land that I'm going to show you. But he couldn't shake them. He got stuck with Lot, he got stuck with his father, dragged the whole crew. And they never got past Haran and they stayed there for 15 years. And that was not complete obedience. Fifteen wasted years, in a sense, still in Mesopotamia, still an idolatrous city, for Haran was as idolatrous as was Ur. And instead of making a clean break, he had dragged along his relatives.

But you'll notice in verse 32 that Terah died at the age of 205 and he died in Haran. And then over in chapter 12 verse 4, Abram at that point decided to leave. It's almost as if once he got rid of the tremendous power and pressure of his father, he could get on with it; not an uncommon situation, by the way, when the call of God comes and someone is sort of stuck with that pressure and reluctant to be fully obedient. But he began to move. After the death of his father, verse 5, "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son and all their substance that they had gathered and the souls they had gotten in Haran and they went forth to go to the land of Canaan. Into the land of Canaan they came." And again, I have to believe that it wasn't the fullest kind of obedience yet, but it's getting better. At least he's now leaving Haran and he's moving out. He crosses the hot, burning desert to an absolutely unknown place. And I believe at this point his faith is sufficient to be honored by God, verse 6: "Abram passed through the land of the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, and the Canaanite was then in the land, and the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.' And there builded he an altar to the Lord, who appeared unto him."

Now, here we see for the first time the response of a sovereignly chosen man. He responds by worshiping the true God. It's almost as if he couldn't bring himself to do this until he had unloaded his idolatrous father. But he worshiped the true God. Verse 8, "He removed from there to a mountain on the east of Bethel, pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, and there he builded an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord." Now here is the man of faith. He has now come to worship the true God. He has jettisoned, if you will, the past idolatry, he is moving ahead and he becomes the model of faith.

He was not perfect. For sure he was not perfect. For example, the first test he had to face was a famine, and when he faced a famine, instead of seeking help from God, he decided to seek help from the Egyptians. And he got himself in a compromising situation and you remember he had to lie to Pharaoh, didn't he? At least he thought he did. If he had trusted God to meet his needs in the famine instead of trusting Egypt, which seemed later to be a rather common problem for the Jews,

he could have avoided that sin. He also maintained that unequal yoking by dragging along Lot with him and that resulted in dire consequences, the greatest of which is indicated to us in the nineteenth chapter in the turning of Lot's wife to a pillar of salt.

In chapter 15 we see Abraham experiencing fear. We even see that man, Abraham, that model of faith, committing adultery in a stupid effort to produce the seed that he wasn't sure God could produce. And going in unto Hagar, his handmaid, and producing from that stupid act of adultery a nation of proud, arrogant enemies of Israel.

But, in spite of his imperfection, he recovered from his lack of faith and his sin and he was a man who believed God. No man is perfect and no man believes God perfectly. But Abraham was a model of believing God even with his imperfection. That's comforting, isn't it? He picked up and left his city, his homeland, his environment, his idols and he didn't know where he was going. And so he became the pattern of faith. He believed God for a child when he and his wife were barren all their lifelong. And I guess the amazing epitaph of Abraham comes in Hebrews 11:13 where it says he died in faith never having received the promise. He never saw the fulfillment. He never saw the land, he never saw the nation, and he never saw the blessing. He died. But he died believing that God would keep His word. That's what faith's all about. And even the pagans were rather in awe of him. In Genesis 23:6 the pagans said of him, "You are a prince of God." They could see a quality about him that made him stand out.

You know, the man never really put his feet down on the earth. When Sarah died, the pagans wanted to give him the grave site and he wouldn't let them do that. He insisted that he would pay for it because he did not want to be obligated to the world and its occupants. He wanted no such obligation. And when it was time to find a wife for Isaac, he did not want a wife from among the Canaanites, but rather from among those people whom he trusted. And it tells us in Genesis 23 verse 4 that all his lifelong he remained a stranger. He remained a wanderer. He remained a sojourner. And he never returned to Mesopotamia's lush, green land. which was his home. Why?

Hebrews tells us because he sought for a city whose builder and maker was whom? God. He had a divine perspective. A blessed man, overcoming his human weaknesses, overcoming those periods of doubt, overcoming those acts of stupidity, he maintained a life of faith. He never landed very hard in this world, he always looked for that city whose builder and maker was God. He stepped out of his entire environment to go to a place and to build a nation and to take a land and to be a blessing, none of which he ever really saw. But he died with the faith that God would fulfill it.

He's a classic illustration of the definition of faith given in Hebrews 11. Faith is basically "the substance of things (What?) hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And he believed, though he never saw.

Now let's go into Romans chapter 4. This man then becomes the model of faith. He believes what he can't see. And he dies believing what he's never seen. And you want to know something? That's how it is for a Christian. We believe in One whom we have never seen, right? And we believe we're going to a city whose builder and maker is God, and to the very moment when we breathe our last breath, we are hoping for eternity, that we'll see that place which we have never seen. We are believing in a salvation which we cannot see, a Savior which we cannot see, a heaven which we cannot see, an eternal blessedness which we cannot see. And so, in that sense, we are the children of Abraham. That is, we carry a faith that is like the faith of Abraham. With all of our human imperfections, as with

his, we are saved by God through faith. That's Paul's message.

Do you remember last time that I told you that the Jews tried to say that the reason God chose Abraham was because he was a perfect man? Hardly. The reason God chose Abraham was because God is God. And He chose Abraham and Abraham responded and he was made righteous because God chose him and he responded to that choice, not because he was a perfect man. And so, he illustrates to us that we too are saved by God's gracious choice to which we respond in faith.

Now, let's look at Romans chapter 4 again and notice the first point that he makes in verses 1 to 8. And the first point is this; Abraham was justified by faith not works, by faith not works. The second point is by grace not law. And the third point is by divine power not human effort. But we're looking at the first point and I think we're going to see some very helpful things as we look tonight. Abraham was justified by faith not works. Now you know that. We've said that over and over again, but let's see carefully this context.

First there is a negative and then there is a positive. Let's go back to the negative in verses 1 and 2, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?" In other words, Paul says, look, I've been telling you you're saved by grace through faith. Some of you are going to say, now wait a minute. We've always believed you're saved by works and Abraham is proof of that. Abraham was a perfect man so God chose him. So, Paul brings up Abraham. All right, what did Abraham find? What did he gain by his unaided human flesh? As pertaining to his flesh, Abraham as a human being, what did he discover? What did he gain with God?

Verse 2, "For if Abraham were justified (or made right with God) by works, then he has something of which to glory; but not before God." And as I told you last week, what he is saying is what did Abraham gain? Let's look at that question. What did he gain in his own human flesh? First of all, if he gained righteousness with God because of his own human effort, then he should be glorified, not God, right? But you're not going to get away with that before God. If Abraham was justified by works, he could boast, but not from God's viewpoint. He was not made right with God by his works.

Now this is basic but so important. You cannot do anything on your own effort to gain acceptance with God. You can't do that; it isn't so many spiritual pushups. It isn't being a good person, better than other people. You can't do it on your own. Chapter 3 verse 20, "By the deeds of the law," that is by your good works, keeping God's law, "no flesh is made right with God in His sight." Nobody comes on those terms. Verse 27 says, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." And it is excluded not by the law of works but by the law of faith. In other words, if you were saved by what you did then you get the glory. You can say, I had the intelligence, I had the foresight, I had the insight, I had the cleverness, I had the righteousness to do good works and to come to God all on my own. Then you get the glory. You get the credit. But not before God. God is not in the business of glorifying men; He's in the business of glorifying Himself. Nobody was ever made right with God by works.

Now, I want to show you a passage in Philippians chapter 3 for a moment that will help you to see this. Philippians 3 verse 3, this is one of my favorite definitions of a Christian: "We are the circumcision." That is we are marked; circumcision was the mark of a Jew, we have our mark. "And we are marked as those who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have (How much confidence in the flesh? No confidence.) no confidence in the flesh," Now watch verse 4, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh." I mean, if you're going to start comparing your flesh against my flesh, your good works against my good works, I have some things I can throw up.

"If any other man thinks that he has reasons for which he might trust in the flesh, I've got more. I was circumcised the eighth day." And that's the way it says you're supposed to be in the Jewish law. "I was of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin," one of the good tribes. "A Hebrew of the Hebrews." What does that mean? A true Jew, devout. "As touching the law a Pharisee," and you can't get any more legalistic than that. "Concerning zeal, I was so religious I persecuted the church, and when it came down to the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless." Now you want to start comparing flesh? You think you've got room to justify yourself by your flesh? I've got more. But you want to know something? "All those things which you might assume were gain to me, I counted (What?) loss. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung." Isn't that amazing? Manure. He says, all of that stuff, all of my human works, all of my religious effort amounts to a pile of manure. Very vivid. So, don't drag your manure pile into the presence of God and say, here, God, evaluate me by my manure pile. That's all it is.

You see, the issue is verse 9; you have to be found in Christ. Watch: "Not having (What?) mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ." The righteousness which is of God by faith. Do you see?

Now, Paul talks about justification by faith constantly, Philippians, Galatians, Romans, etc., because it's so utterly important. What has Abraham... Go back to Romans 4. What has Abraham gained by his manure pile? Absolutely nothing but a sickening stench in the nostrils of a holy God. Get it out of My presence. And that's the best. If a man is made right with God by works, it's utterly and absolutely contrary to everything the Bible teaches.

So, what did Abraham gain? Nothing. Not before God. Now, let's go to the positive, verse 3. Verses 1 and 2 say he was not justified by works; verses 3 through 8 say he was justified by faith. And where do you go to get the answer? The Scripture. Paul always goes to the Scripture. Here's the issue. Genesis 15:6 he quotes, "Abraham believed God and it was put to his account for righteousness." Oh what a great statement. It wasn't what he did. It was what he believed, right? Salvation is by believing. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says: "For by grace are you saved through (What?) faith and that's not of (What?) yourself." The grace isn't of yourself, the faith isn't of yourself, none of the whole process is of yourself. "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves but it is the (What?) gift of God, not of works lest any man should (What?) boast." It's by faith.

Now, the essence of Abraham's greatness was that he believed God. God sovereignly chose him. That is the elective purpose of God. And he responded in faith, believing. Abraham took God at His word, packed up his stuff and left, and with all of his human frailties lived a life of trusting God and that was credited to his account for righteousness. Now there's the basic doctrine of salvation. How can a man be right with God? How can a sin be forgiven and how can he receive entrance into God's kingdom? Not by his own works but rather by what he believes. His righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, put to his account.

Now, that's what we mean by justification by faith. Now justification; you hear that word. It's a technical term and it sort of refers to a legal status, that we have been declared to be just by our faith.

Now let me just give you a little footnote for you theologians, some of you might just feel this going right on by. Don't worry about that. I'll be back to you in a moment. But there's a lot of talk about

justification by faith and all of the ins and outs and nuances of it. But try to keep this thought in mind. And I try to articulate this in a simple way so that you'll be able to at least have something to sort of meditate on. People say, "Well, if you're saved by faith, then faith is a work, so salvation is by works." But the Bible says you can't be saved by works but you're saved by faith, therefore faith can't be a work biblically. So what may appear to you to be very logical is unbiblical. You got that? Somebody said if you can get that in your head you've got it in a nutshell.

Now listen, let me say it another way. Who said that? Faith is never the basis of justification. It is never the reason for justification. It is only the channel by which justification is received. And that's a distinction we make in terminology even though we can't fully understand it with our minds. Faith is not what I do to earn salvation. It's not that God says, oh, look at his faith, it's so wonderful. Faith is not like, "I believe for every drop of rain, a flower grows." If you believe that you're dumb. One flower doesn't grow for every drop of rain. I told you it was dumb. "I believe that someone in the great somewhere." There is no someone and there is no somewhere. So, people who just sort of believe, you know, the religious people, they don't earn salvation by their believing. Saving faith is simply the hand that reaches out to take the gift that is sovereignly offered. But the initiation comes from God. It isn't that God is responding to some kind of virtuous faith.

James 1:18 puts it this way. "Of His own will begot us with the word of truth." "Every good and perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father." All faith does is accept it, and that's why I believe that within the saving work of God there is the creating of the faith necessary to receive. And so we are not saved because of our faith. We are not saved by reason of the value and worth of our faith. Faith is simply a convicted heart offered the gift of salvation which responds by reaching out. So don't get the idea that faith is a work that you do for which you're rewarded by being saved. It's only a channel; it's only a response to God. It is, in a sense...I guess... I wrote down this statement, maybe this is another way to say it. God does not justify the believing person because of the worthiness of his faith but because of the worthiness of the One who is believed in. Our faith is not meritorious; it is only the empty hand that takes the gift.

In Acts 13:39, 38 says: "Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." That's Paul's sermon. And then in verse 39, "By Him, all that believe are justified from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." There's no work that can justify you, but believing brings about justification. And that believing, as I said again, is simply receiving the gift.

Now, let's define. If saving faith is not a meritorious work, if it's not that God says, oh, look at that person with all that faith. That's enough. I'll just dump the gospel on. They've got such virtuous safe...er, faith, that I'll redeem them for that. If it's not that, then what is saving faith? We've seen what it is not. What is it? And this is very important for us to identify because there are many people who think they've got it and they don't, right? I mean, there are a lot of people. The people, for example, who are in the Catholic Church and who believe the Catholic system must believe that they are redeemed. They must believe they have faith in God, they must believe they have faith in Christ. But the fact is, if they're hoping in their works they're lost no matter what they may believe about the quality of their faith. And there are people likewise in the Protestant church with the same situation who must believe that they're redeemed, but according to the Bible and when they say, "Lord, Lord," He's going to say, "I never knew you, go away." So, what is saving faith?

Now I'm going to give you a little acrostic. I'm not much for acrostics, but this one just fell in my

notes. I mean, I started writing out the elements of saving faith and would you believe that the first four were F-A-I-T and all I needed was an "H" and I had FAITH. And so, I said, "Lord, if that's the way You want it, that's the way it will be, right?" Alright, now these five elements will help you to understand how to perceive saving faith.

First, saving faith includes "F," facts, facts. When we say we believe, it is not that we just believe. I always think of that song we used to hear, "I believe in music. I believe in love." Well, that's nice. But that doesn't do you a bit of good. Or, "I believe in God," or "I believe in goodness," or "I believe that God is up there and all's well with the world," or "I believe in religion, or "I believe in going to church," or "I believe in Jesus." Well, that sounds better, but the issue is what facts about Him do you believe? It doesn't do you any good to say, "I believe in God," or "I believe in Jesus." Saving faith begins with facts. It is not a blind leap. Liberal theologians talk about the "leap of faith," where you just sort of leap into nothingness, and you say "I believe" you're not sure what. Generalities about God, generalities about Jesus, generalities about the Bible. But that isn't saving faith. Saving faith is based on fact.

First Corinthians chapter 15 gives us the facts. They're very clear. "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you which you also received" and you believed in it, obviously implied. "And it's which you stand, by which you also are saved if you keep in memory what I preached unto you unless you have believed in vain." You know, what's another word for "vain"? Nothing, emptiness, uselessness. Unless you're just believing in nothing, or believing in believing, or believing uselessly, you're saved, which is to say that if your faith is legitimate faith, you're saved. And it is based on keeping in memory what I preached, the facts. Here they are, verse 3: First of all, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Now that is a lot. Christ, who is He? He died, a substitutionary atonement for our sins according to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Verse 4, "That He was buried, that He rose again the third day, as predicted in the Scriptures, that after His resurrection He was seen by Cephas, then the twelve, then 500 brethren of whom the greater part remain to the present time but some are fallen asleep. And after that He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all, He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." Now there are the facts, that Jesus is the Christ, according to the Old Testament prophets, that He died a substitutionary death for sin on the cross, that He was literally buried in the ground from which three days later He arose in triumph and resurrection. His resurrection is literal and bodily and physical as given evidence to by the testimony of over 500 eyewitnesses and the last of which is myself.

Those are the facts. The facts: Saving faith starts with the facts. It is not enough to just believe this or that or the other thing. In fact if, Galatians 1 says, somebody comes along and fouls up the facts and preaches to you some other gospel, let him be what? Accursed. You cannot alter the facts. You cannot touch the facts. They are essential to the matter of believing. In fact, in 2 John 10, if anybody comes along and starts talking about some other Christ, don't let him in your house, don't even bid him God speed or you'll be a partaker of his evil deeds. The facts.

Second, the "A" in faith stands for "agreement." It is one thing to know the facts; it is something else to believe the facts. And this element of saving faith is, having been exposed to and understanding the facts you then believe the facts to be the facts. It's one thing to know about them, something else to believe them. That's the issue. That's where we were this morning, you see. Where the disciples said after Jesus walking on the water, the next day, "We believe and are sure that You are the

Christ, the Son of the living God." First the facts and then agreement with the facts. The affirmation of those facts within the heart. Yes, I know they're true. Yes, I believe they're true.

Now listen to me. Are there people who know the facts who aren't saved? Sure. Are there people who believe the facts who aren't saved? Are there? Yes. Many people. They believe them. I've been witnessing to a man for over 20 years who believes it all. That's as far as it goes. So, you have to come to the third letter "I" and I think that stands for "internalization." You know the facts. That's why we preach the facts. That's why we preach the Bible as a literal, historical book. That's why we preach the reality of the Scripture. That's the facts. And then to try to convince people to believe the facts and then you come to the internalization, which is to desire to make that belief personal. It's personal appropriation.

In John 1, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," it says in verse 11. But in verse 12 it says: "But as many as received Him, to them gave the authority to become the children of God even to them that believe on His name who were born not of blood nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of men but of God." So it wasn't their will, it wasn't their flesh, wasn't their power. They were born, they were given eternal life, they were saved by the act of God. They responded by believing and receiving. That's the element we want you to see. The facts, believing the facts, receiving the facts, that's internalization.

The first two can't really make salvation a reality. Jesus said in John 8, you come along and you believe on Me but only when you continue in My word are you My real disciple. There has to be an internalization, a desire for personal appropriation.

And you know, I guess I could say at this point even you could stop and say a person would be short of really being saved, because I know there are people who know the facts, believe the facts and they want that reality in their life, they long for that reality, but they can't let go of something. Have you ever met people like that? And so, that takes us to that fourth letter, "T," and let's call that "trust." Trust, it is not merely intellectual knowledge, the facts; it is not merely agreement, believing the facts; it is not merely personal desire, wanting it to happen; but it is trust, which says, "Here it is, I give you my life and I accept it." This I call total commitment. If you want, you can make the "T" stand for that: trust, true trust, full commitment. This means I repent of my sin, this means I affirm the lordship of Jesus Christ, I turn around and I put my life in His care. I trust Him with my life. Full commitment.

Do you remember the section of Matthew 13 where we studied the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the parable of the pearl of great price? And we saw that the treasure in the field really represented the reality of salvation. The pearl of great price represented the reality of salvation. In both cases, when the person came to purchase the treasure, to purchase the pearl, it says: "He gave all that he had." Now that's a very important truth. When you come to saving faith you exchange all that you are for all that He is. You exchange all that you possess for all that He possesses. That's entrusting. That's turning from your sin, affirming His lordship and giving Him your life.

Now, I think Peter says it well in 1 Peter 2, where he says in verse 25 that salvation is turning from sin to God. It's not adding God to your activity. It's turning from sin to God. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, salvation is described in the case of the Thessalonians as turning to God from idols. That's knowing the facts, agreeing with the facts, desiring the internalization and then doing it — full commitment.

Now, I want to take you on a fast trip through a couple of scriptures in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 7 verse 35... Well, let's go on to chapter 11 and we'll just pick up the ones that are directly related 'cause our time is getting away, 11:21, and I want you to catch this little phrase: "And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and (Watch how their saving faith is described.) they turned unto the Lord." They turned unto the Lord.

Chapter 15 verse 19, this is the Council of Jerusalem: "Wherefore my judgment is that we trouble not them who come from among the Gentiles," here it comes, "are turned unto God." Chapter ... Well, let's go all the way to chapter 26, verse 16, and here Paul is recounting his conversion and he says that he spoke to Jesus and Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutes." And then He says, "Rise stand on thy feet, I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes to..." Watch this. Turn them from darkness to light. "Turn them" is implied. "... from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Me."

"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Now watch, "But showed first unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem and throughout all the borders of Judea," in other words, this was his message everywhere, "and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do works fit for repentance."

When you come to Christ there is a turning from idols to God, a turning from sin to God, a repenting of the past to move toward God. Don't ever let anybody tell you there is a salvation apart from repentance. There is not. It is a turning, and that's that aspect of trust, where you drop all you possess and receive all that He has to give.

That brings us to the last letter, "H," and that is for "hope," for hope. Facts, agreement, internalization, trust, and hope. Now hope is a very important concept and I want you to understand why. Listen very carefully to what I say. When you were saved you were saved in hope. Do you know why? Because you have not yet seen the ultimate provision in your salvation, right? You believe with all your heart that you're going to go to heaven but you haven't seen heaven. You believe with all your heart that you're going to dwell in the presence of the eternal God but you haven't seen that yet. You believe with all your heart that you're going to be in a place where Jesus Christ will be. You believe you're going to be in the presence of the redeemed saints forever and forever. You believe that there's going to be a time when you are perfect and you lose your human frailties and your propensity to sin. You believe that and you are saved in hope.

Now watch. So that true salvation is not some momentary kind of thing, but it is a commitment of my entire temporal and eternal destiny to God. It is giving Him my forever.

How many people have you known who knew the facts, believed the facts, wanted to appropriate the facts personally and maybe even said, here, I give you my life, Lord, and then when things got better, they took it back and ran? In one of those sort of quote-unquote "foxhole conversions?" True saving faith gives God not only the moment but gives God the destiny. It is not a momentary escapism. It is not a momentary satisfaction. It is the placing of my eternal destiny in the Lord's control, to be fully and finally revealed in future glory. And we live in an unfulfilled hope.

Now, I don't doubt. I know how it's going to turn out. I know the Word of God and I have the confirmation of the witness of the Spirit in my heart.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians 2:13, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Now salvation again is seen as believing the truth and then the sanctifying work, the regenerating transforming work of the Spirit. "Unto which He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the tradition which you've been taught by word and epistle." And now this benediction: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God even our Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope." We're saved in hope.

That's why in the first letter to the Thessalonians, I think it's chapter 5 verse 8, Paul said: "Put on the helmet of the hope of salvation."

Now, saving faith; I just tried to dissect it for you. It incorporates knowing the facts, agreeing with the facts, and that's why it's so important to believe the facts. It all begins there; and then desiring to make them personal, to appropriate the death of Christ on your behalf. Then coming to the point where you entrust all you are to Him, not just for the moment but forever, turning from idols to God. That's saving faith.

Would you believe that that was my introduction to the message tonight? We ended where we ended last week, verse 3. Boy, this is good stuff.

Now, that's the kind of faith Abraham had. He believed what God said. He heard what God said, he heard the facts. You go; this is what I'll do. He agreed with those facts. He wanted to appropriate those facts so he entrusted everything to God and he did it in hope because he never saw the fulfillment. But he believed God to his dying day. So, he's a perfect illustration, isn't he, for saving faith? And verse 3 says it's that kind of faith that put to his account righteousness. Let's pray together.

Before we dismiss, you need to ask yourself a question. Do you believe? Ask yourself that. And if the answer is yes, then ask yourself what kind of faith? Saving faith? The right kind of faith? Or is it the cheap faith here today gone tomorrow? The shallow faith that misrepresents the facts? Or that doesn't fully entrust itself to the Lord Jesus Christ? You can miss saving faith by 1, missing the facts; 2, not really believing the facts; 3, by never really personalizing the facts; 4, by never really fully repenting and turning from sin to God affirming totally His lordship, or by denying that eternal element of your salvation which is an abandonment for time and eternity to Christ. If you can't define your faith in those terms, it is not saving faith. And so we call upon you to examine your heart and know the faith that saves, not that you will by that faith earn salvation, as if God gave it for your merit, but that by that faith you have reached out an empty hand to receive the gift. And that kind of faith will cause God to put in your account His righteousness and make you eternally right with God and regenerate and transform your life. That is salvation. You have nothing else to cling to but receiving the gift by believing.

Father, we ask that Your Spirit would cause men's hearts, women's hearts to be turned in faith to

Christ. Do that work even now for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).