

Abraham--Justified by Faith, Part 3

Romans 4:4-8

45-36

Let's look at Romans chapter 4, Romans chapter 4. The whole chapter is one unit, deals with the faith of Abraham. Abraham is Paul's great illustration of justification by faith. He has presented the doctrine of justification by faith in chapter 3 verses 21 to 31. He has stated it there so marvelously, so masterfully under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Now he chooses as the illustration of this doctrine the man Abraham. And it is an apt choice because Abraham was basically the man whom the Jews were using as their proof of justification by law, by legalism. And so he steals their thunder. He turns the tables on them and he proves that Abraham was justified by faith.

Abram was his name first. It means "exalted father." God changed his name to Abraham which means "the father of many nations," for He had given him that promise. And it was twofold. Physically from the loins of Abraham would come multitudes of people, millions of people. The Semitic world, Arab and Jew alike, descended from Abraham. Genesis 17, the first 8 verses, talk about how God said Abraham will produce generations of people. In fact, it is said that they would be as the sand of the sea, or the stars of the heavens. He was the father of many, but not only physically, spiritually as well; for he is the father of all those who are of faith. He is the pattern established, and all others who put their faith in God follow the pattern of their father, Abraham.

Galatians makes this abundantly clear. Paul, writing in chapter 3 verse 6, says: "Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know ye therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham, and the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed, so then they who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."

So, not only did Abraham in a sense produce physical seed, but as well set the standard for spiritual production. And so, as millions follow his directive of faith, they occupy a place uniquely identified in the Scripture as children of Abraham. And that is because he is the example of justification by faith. And Paul makes that point in Romans and as I noted, he makes it in Galatians because it is so very important.

Now, just as a way of summarizing what we've said relative to the faith of Abraham, let me just see if I can boil it down to about three key things.

Abraham believed God for a new country. And so he left the city of Ur and journeyed to Canaan.

Secondly, he believed God for a child and that when he was barren and old. And as important as those two elements of his faith were, they stand in secondary importance to another element.

He believed God for a Redeemer. He believed God for a Redeemer. As we today look back to Christ, Abraham then looked forward to Christ. He did not know His name, he did not know all the historical information that we know, but he looked for a Redeemer. That is abundantly clear.

For example, if we were to go back to the third chapter of Galatians and note the sixteenth verse, we would read this: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not and to seeds (plural) as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." In other words, when the Lord gave a promise to Abraham, He didn't say "to your seeds," many, but He promised to him "a seed," one. And Abraham must have understood based on Galatians 3:16 that it was not just the many that was the key in the promise but the one who would be the Christ.

If you look also at the great eleventh chapter of Hebrews, you will find another indication of this same reality that Abraham saw beyond the many to the one. In Hebrews 11:13, it says: "These all died in faith," that of course meaning Abraham and Sarah. They did not receive the promises, as well as those before them, "but having seen them afar off they were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." So, they really didn't see the fulfillment of the promise, which means that the promise must have been beyond Isaac. He saw Isaac. The single seed that God said Abraham would have was someone other than Isaac and that's why it says he died not seeing the promise fulfilled.

Verse 17 tells us: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." In other words, he knew that the seed was not Isaac but that the seed would be called through a generation of Isaac. And then verse 19, the reason he was willing to take the life of Isaac was that he accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead from which also he received him in a figure. In other words, it is also very possible that Abraham was aware that this one who would come would be one raised from the dead, for he saw his own son as a potential figure, symbol, type of that one who would come.

Jesus really sums up this concept that Abraham saw a Redeemer in His statement in John 8:56. Listen to what Jesus said. "Abraham, your father," He said to the Jews, "Abraham, your father, was extremely happy to see My day and he saw it and rejoiced." Whose day? His day. So, Abraham not only believed God for a new country, he not only believed God for a son, but he believed God for a Redeemer.

He, then, put his faith in God's promised Redeemer, and so becomes the pattern for all who put their faith in God's promised Redeemer, be they on that side of the cross or this side. And when the promise concerning a son came to Abraham, he believed beyond that to the blessed seed, and it is very likely that he understood the significance of Genesis 3:15, that there would come the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head.

So, he lived and so he died in faith. And as a man who lived and died in faith, and faith even in God's promised Redeemer, that faith was put into his account for righteousness. He then becomes the pattern. He then becomes the model. And he is our father, not in terms of racial genealogy, but in terms of ethical similarity, by faith. And so he is the perfect illustration of chapter 3 and thus is chosen by Paul for that purpose.

Now, I told you that in chapter 4 there are basically three angles to Paul's presentation. And they crisscross and overlap and intersect, and we'll not really be able to keep them clear-cut but there seems to be a thrust that is unique to each section.

First of all, he shows in verses 1 through 8 that Abraham was justified by faith, not works. Then in verses 9 through 17 that he was justified by grace and not law. And then in verses 18 to 25, that he was justified by divine effort, not human effort.

Now, we're still looking at number one. Let's go back and state it. Abraham was justified by faith, not works. Now he presents each of these three points with a negative and a positive. We saw the negative in verses 1 and 2. And basically verses 1 and 2 tell us that Abraham gained nothing before God by his own unaided human effort. What did Abraham in his flesh find? Certainly not justification by works, or he would have cause to glory, but he has no such cause before God.

The positive is in verse 3. Let's look at what the Scripture says. It wasn't by works, but rather Genesis 15:6 is quoted, "Abraham believed God and it was put to his account for righteousness." Last time we talked about his genuine saving faith. And now we will see that because of that saving faith, God put righteousness into his account. In other words, God graciously gave him something he didn't deserve. God graciously gave him something he couldn't earn. It wasn't by his works. As pertaining to his flesh, he could not please God. He could not accomplish righteousness. But when he believed God in obedience, in confidence, and in the promise of a Redeemer, God put to his account righteousness.

Now, verses 4 and 5 takes us further in Paul's presentation. Listen to what he says. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Now this summarizes what we've been saying. The faith of Abraham was the genuine kind. He heard the facts. He believed them. He desired them. He entrusted his life to the living Lord in hope of eternal fulfillment. Genuine faith. He was committed to the outworking of genuine faith which is obedience and worship. It was not something of his own effort, it was all of grace. And may I remind you of Romans 11:6 that says: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace." It's either grace or works. It can't be both, one or the other.

And so, we see then verse 4. Notice what it says. "To the one who works is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt." In other words, if you did something to earn your salvation it wouldn't be grace it would be wages, wouldn't it? If you worked for it, God would owe it to you. But salvation comes by grace, free absolute favor on the part of God. It was not something Abraham had earned, but something he was given by grace.

Now verse 5 says: "To the one who works not but believes, that believing results in righteousness." And so the faith of Abraham agrees, really, with the doctrine of Paul. It was not a work to be rewarded. And I made that point, I think, last time. Faith is not a work; it is merely a channel which receives the work that God has done. It is an empty hand that reaches out. It is not God saying, oh, look at the marvelous faith of that person, they're so worthy because of their faith, I'll redeem them. It is not that. Man cannot do good works of any kind. He cannot do saving works of any kind. He cannot do meritorious good works of any kind. He can do nothing to make himself right with God.

Now to help you understand this, John Gerstner, the theologian, has a kind of good little way that you can look at it. Now listen to this. There are four kinds of human deeds, four kinds of works. First of all, there are bad-bad works, bad-bad works. In other words, unregenerate people can't do anything good morally, ethically before God that can bring them into right relationship with Him. But some of the things they do are just downright evil. So, we'll call them bad-bad works. And those are the works of the non-Christian. Those are the evil activities of non-Christians.

Secondly, we can talk about good-bad works. Now what are good-bad works? Well, they're bad works in the sense that they cannot earn salvation but they're good in the sense that they're philanthropy, they're nice. So, we'll call this unregenerate niceness, non-Christian niceness. So, on the one hand you have non-Christian bad, and on the other hand, you have non-Christian good. And neither one of them are going to redeem them. Good-bad works are just non-Christians doing nice things. But that doesn't make them right with God.

Then you have bad-good works. You say, "What are bad-good works?" Those are the activities of hypocrites. They attempt to do good works, religious works, godly works but they're bad-good works. And that isn't going to get them there either.

You see, man can't do good-good works. He can do bad-bad works, good-bad works, and bad-good works, but not good-good works. Does that help? You're enjoying it whether it helps or not, right? You see, it is impossible for a man to do good-good works, that which can bring him into a redemptive relationship with God. And so, because man is incapacitated, as we have noted in chapter 3 already — that there is none that doeth good, no not one. And we must define that as none that doeth good-good works, no not one. They're all gone out of the way, they're all unprofitable and so forth. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. Isaiah 64:6, all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags. So faith then is not somebody doing good-good works for which they are rewarded with salvation, but it is somebody who knows they can only do bad-bad works, good-bad works or bad-good works, and in desperation they cry out to God to redeem them from their incapacity. That's why Jesus said in the Beatitudes, when you come to God you come with a meekness and a brokenness and a begging spirit, crying out for a righteousness you know you don't have; and in faith, embracing the work that Jesus did, not any work that you have done. So, salvation comes by grace. And if it were works then there wouldn't be any grace 'cause you'd be getting what you deserve. And you know why that can't be? Because, if that were true then you'd get the glory, and if you got the glory you'd steal it from God, and God doesn't allow that because it says in the Old Testament, "My glory will I not give to another." And so, salvation is all of grace.

The word in verse 4 is interesting, *ergazomai*, the word that talks about working there. It means "to do that which brings results." If we received righteousness because of some work of our own doing, then there would be no grace involved, it would just be merit. It would just be like going to work, putting in your eight hours, collecting your check at the end of the week. You don't go to your boss and say, "Hey, I've given a full week, please be gracious and pay me." You don't want grace, you want pay for your works; he's in debt to you. And God is not. God is not. God is in the debt of no man. You can earn no saving wages. God owes you absolutely nothing and that is abundantly clear in the Scripture. Because the intended purpose, you see, of all men and all creation and everything that is, the intended purpose of all of this is to give God what? Glory, and if men were redeemed by works, it would violate the intended purpose of the universe. All things are by Him and for Him.

Later on in Romans, I think Paul makes an excellent affirmation of this great truth as he comes to the

great benediction at the end of chapter 11 and says: "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever, amen." And as you read the great paean of praise that is the first chapter of Ephesians, you see that everything He does in redemption He does to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His glory. You see in chapter 3 of Ephesians that everything He does through the Holy Spirit's power in the church is that He might be glorified in the church, that everything that is is that God may be glorified. And so, there is no wage paid to man else he steal the glory of God.

And, there is also that very obvious reality that you couldn't be saved by your works. And I'll give you four reasons, just kind of summing them up and adding that last one at the end. Number one, you couldn't be saved by your own works because your works make no provision for your past sin. In other words, you can't be saved by present righteousness because that doesn't do anything with your past sin. That doesn't account for it. That doesn't deal with it. How can your past sins find atonement if you're redeemed by works? Secondly, fallen creatures cannot produce the divine standard and the divine standard is "Be ye (What?) perfect." Thirdly, if you say you're redeemed by works then Christ's death is utterly needless. And then fourthly, and the point we made a moment ago, God's glory would be eclipsed by the glory of man.

And so, verse 5 says: "It is to him that worketh not but believes on the One who justifies the ungodly." And inherent in that concept is that you see yourself as ungodly. A man came to me Wednesday night. He was introduced to me and he's been coming to our church and I'm so happy about that. I hope he's here tonight. And he said to me, "I enjoy this church and I enjoy this fellowship and I enjoy these people and I like to listen, but," he said, "I think you've pointed out my basic problem. My basic problem is I do not see myself as a sinner. I don't see that I'm a sinner."

I said, "That's the basic problem." If you don't see yourself as a sinner, there's no salvation for you. Unless you believe on Him that justifies the ungodly, there's no accounting righteousness to you. And so, you must affirm initially that you are the ungodly. To the one that knows in his heart that he can't work his way into God's kingdom by his own self-effort, to the one who knows in his heart he must abandon the self-righteous route, to the one in his heart who knows that he is ungodly, unacceptable to God, and by faith embraces the One who justifies the ungodly, there is saving grace.

Now, I admit to you that saving grace is very hard to understand. Because people always ask the question: Well, aren't some people better than other people? You mean God just accepts anybody, even the goody kind of people along with the vile wretched gutter-type people? You mean everybody comes the same way? Being... Having more good-bad works, does it help?

Let me show you an illustration. Take your Bible and look at the twentieth chapter of Matthew, one of the most difficult parables for people to understand because we don't understand grace. All we understand is reward and debt and pay and wages, hard for us to understand grace. Matthew 20 verse 1, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man that's a householder. He went out early in the morning to hire laborers in his vineyard." Probably about six o'clock in the morning, that's when their day began in terms of the work and he went out and got a crew of workers at 6 a.m. And when he agreed with the laborers, he agreed for a denarius a day which is the standard pay for labor. "He sent them into the vineyard and he went out about the third hour, saw they're standing idle in the marketplace. Said to them, Go ye also to the vineyard and whatever's right I'll give you. And they went their way. He went out about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and he did the same and about the eleventh hour he went out and he found others standing idle, said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all

day?' They said, 'Because nobody hired us.' He said, 'Go into the vineyard and whatever's right, that shall you receive.'"

So, when evening, that's 6 p.m., these guys have been working one hour; the others have been working twelve. "The lord of the vineyard said to his steward, call the laborers and give them their hire beginning from the last to the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a denarius." A whole day's wage for one hour's work. "And when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more and they likewise received every man a denarius. And when they had received it, they murmured against the householder saying, 'These last have worked but one hour and thou hast made them equal unto us who have borne the burden and heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a denarius? Take what is thine and go thy way. I will give this...unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?' So the last shall be first, the first last, for many are called, few chosen."

What is this teaching? Just this, that God bestows grace, the same grace, the same magnanimous grace, the same benefits of grace on the people who just slide in by the hair of their chinny-chin, just as much as those who have served their whole life long. That's hard for us to understand someone like this. That's grace, equally bestowed on all.

Now, go back to Romans chapter 4. Whoever they are, whenever they come, the grace is the same for them all. And because of faith, he says, the end of verse 5, it is accounted to them for righteousness. We're not righteous, but righteousness is put into our account; a marvelous thought, just marvelous.

We cannot justify ourselves, try as we will. That's why Job 9:20 says: "If I justify myself my own mouth condemns me." You can't justify yourself. What you want to do to be saved, what you must do to be saved is to do the very opposite and affirm that you are ungodly, that you are utterly ungodly. You see, that was the problem with the Pharisees all along. They never would admit their ungodliness, so they were unredeemable, because God only justifies one kind of person. What is it in verse 5? What kind? He justifies the what? Ungodly. Now, the fact is that's all the kind of people there are. But not all of them are willing to admit it, right? God can only justify the ungodly. That's why when anyone thinks they're okay the way they are, they're unredeemable. End of conversation, because He justifies only the ungodly. Because the Pharisees never were willing to accept that estimation of themselves, they rejected Jesus Christ. In fact, He said to them in the ninth chapter of Matthew, He said, "I haven't come for the people that are well, I've come for the people that are sick." Since you don't think you're sick I can't help you. Anyone who ever came to Jesus Christ came knowing he was a sinner.

"I thank Christ Jesus," said Paul, "who hath enabled me in that He counted me faithful." He saw faith in me. And He put me into the ministry and I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious but I obtained mercy and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: That Christ Jesus came into the world to save (What?) sinners, of whom I am chief." That's the attitude.

Man is ungodly. I wish we had the time to trace that phrase through the New Testament, the ungodliness of man. It is repeated. Paul does it in Romans 5. He repeats it in the concept of an ungodly man in 1 Timothy. Peter uses reference to it, 1 Peter 4, 2 Peter 2. There's one that we might

draw to your attention just very briefly and that is Jude 15, which is a most amazing statement. He says the Lord is going to come in the end, 10,000 of His saints, Jude 15, "to execute judgment upon all." Now listen to this. "And to convict all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Four times he calls men ungodly. Those are the only kind of people He can save, the ungodly. And until you face the reality of your ungodliness and your incapacity, you're irredeemable.

You say, "How can God do that? How can a just and holy God just simply forgive the ungodly?" Because He has been freed to impute righteousness to them because their sin has been imputed to whom? Jesus Christ. And when He died on the cross He bore in His own body our sins, that we might be the recipient of His righteousness. Someone wrote: "The best obedience of my hands dares not appear before Thy throne, but faith can answer Thy demands by pleading what my Lord has done."

You see, it is not the worst sinner who loses heaven, it is the one who thinks himself the least sinner who loses heaven. So, from start to finish, right relationship with God is a gift appropriated by faith.

Now, Abraham's experience is not just isolated, so Paul picks another biggie in the history of Israel, David. Look at verse 6: "Even as David," now this is the ultimate devastation. He's used Abraham against them, now he's about to use their other great hero, David. "Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness apart from works, saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Now, basically you have in verse 7 a sinner characterized by iniquity and sin, you have in verse 8 a sinner characterized by sin, and in both cases the Lord forgives and does not hold that sin against the person. So, we know that that didn't happen by works because both verses define the individual as a what? As a sinner. So how can you say a sinner is blessed? Well, you can only say that if he's been forgiven, or if the Lord does not put his sin to his account, and that is exactly the case. And it doesn't come by works, it comes by faith. You see, the truly blessed man is the one who is forgiven of his sin. And by the way, this is a quote from Psalm 32 verses 1 and 2. And believe me, at that juncture of David's life, he knew guilt. He had been involved in an adultery. He had been involved in what amounts to murder. He had desecrated his throne and the sanctity of his own virtue. He was a vile wretched sinner. In Psalm 51, he went through such agony and such pain. He felt as if God had abandoned him. He was under the horrible experience of guilt. He says in Psalm 32 that his life juices dried up, and that's what happens when guilt occurs. Saliva, one of the life juices, dries up. Anxiety creates pressure in the head that restricts the flow of the blood, another of the life juices. And the lymphatic system is affected and the nervous system is affected and he began to be old before his time and he began to ache in his joints and he began to be sick. Guilt does that.

And then in the midst of all of that he experienced the goodness of God. No wonder he said twice, "Blessed is the man." "Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord forgives." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin." That's the truly blessed man. He knows forgiveness. And so David supports Paul's point. And it's helpful for us to know that Abraham was a pre-Mosaic figure, David was a Mosaic figure. Abraham predates the clear definition of the Mosaic covenant and so we see that God redeems people pre-Mosaic by faith. David shows us that God redeems people in the Mosaic era by faith. And the New Testament carries it into our own era. Always at all times

redemption is a matter of faith resulting in imputed righteousness.

Now let's look at verse 6 a little more closely. David, great king of Israel, describes the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord God imputes righteousness apart from works. Now that says it, beloved. In verse 5 he says He justifies the ungodly in that his faith is counted for righteousness and here David basically is saying the same thing, that the Lord does not impute his sin to him but rather righteousness, apart from his works.

What righteousness is it? Well, we've already learned that in chapter 3, it's the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed. Let me have you look at Psalm 84 for a moment. So many different scriptures deal with this issue, it's hard to select them. But this, I think, might be helpful to you. And here, verse 3, and it talks about finding a right relationship with God. Verse 1: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts, my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Here is an individual who seeks fellowship with God. Here is an individual who experiences intimacy with God. Here is one who is known by God and knows God. Here is one who's entered into a relationship, who's made things right with God. And he gives a marvelous picture of that in verse 3: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they who dwell in thy house."

And he goes on even from there. Now what is this saying? A sparrow is the biblical symbol of worthlessness, basically, the biblical symbol of worthlessness. You could buy sparrows so cheaply, five for two farthings. Sparrows were cheap. They were two for a farthing, but if you wanted to buy two farthings worth they'd throw in an extra sparrow. Worthless, cheap.

But, in a right relationship with God, the one who is worthless becomes infinitely valuable. The sparrow has found a house. The swallow is the symbol of restlessness, restlessness. But the swallow has found a nest for herself in the presence of God. The worthless becomes infinitely valuable. The restless finds rest. And so, there is a marvelous transformation. God looks at the sinner, the ungodly. And when in faith they reach out to embrace the Redeemer, knowing in Him alone is there hope for salvation, at that point God accepts the cry of the sinner and does not impute sin to him anymore. That sin is transformed...transferred, rather, to Jesus Christ. He bears it on the cross. His righteousness is transferred to that sinner. And that is the divine transaction that we know as salvation. And that is blessed. Your sins are enough to damn you, folks, and me too. My sins are enough to send me to hell forever, to say nothing of the anxiety they cause if they are unforgiven. Our mental hospitals are filled with people who are there because of guilt. Some psychiatrists say it's as high as 90 to 95 percent of the people in mental institutions are there because of guilt. They can't find release from the bondage of their unending sinfulness and the fear of an inevitable retribution. Oh how blessed, oh how blessed is the one, verse 7, whose iniquities, *anomia*, lawlessness, is forgiven. Huh, that word "forgiven" is the major word. And just to give you an idea of what it means, it's the major word in the New Testament for forgiveness and basically it means "to send away." Send away, dismissed.

You say, "Oh, boy, you mean the Lord just sends our sins away? How far?" Glad you asked. How far? Far is...as far as what? East is from the west. How far is that? Very far. An infinite east and an infinite west, Psalm 103: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Is that blessed? That is blessed.

It's all symbolized, Leviticus 16:21 and 22 says, with the goat. The priest put his hands on the goat and the goat was sent away. That's where we get the idea of the scapegoat, sent outside the camp. And what did John the Baptist say of the Lord Jesus Christ? "Behold the Lamb of God that (Does what?) takes away the sins of the world." Forgiveness means removal of our sins, all of them. In 1 John it says He has forgiven you all your trespasses for His name's sake. And He has to forgive all of them or it wouldn't be to His glory because He wouldn't be a fully gracious God if He did not forgive some sins of the one who comes to Him. So, He forgives them all.

And then it says further in verse 7 that our sins are covered. And here it's the general word for sin, covered. It's kind of an Old Testament word; the sacrifices covered our sins. And of course, it's quoting out of Psalm 32, and that's why it's used, and the idea of that Old Testament word, our sins are covered. In those days the sins were just sort of covered up, they weren't really fully dealt with. The scapegoat kind of indicated they were sent away, but the other element was they were just covered. And I believe at the cross they got uncovered and sent away for good in total. At the cross He didn't just cover our sin; He uncovered it and sent it away.

And you know something? When Jesus died on the cross, He not only dealt with the sins of the people who would come afterward, but He dealt with the sins who had come before. Abraham's sin was dealt with on the cross, too, in that one marvelous act. No longer was sin covered anymore, it was uncovered and sent away.

Now, may I remind you that this is the entire message of Hebrews 9 and 10? And I need to just take you there for a moment, Hebrews 9 and 10. You have to understand this. Verse 1 says that the first covenant, that's the Old Testament, had ordinances of divine service in an earthly sanctuary. And there was a tabernacle and so forth, a lampstand, showbread, and all, second veil, and the Holy of the Holies and so forth, and he just sort of describes it. Verse 4 had the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, Aaron's rod that budded, tables of the covenant, cherubim and all. The high priest went in and did his routine. But verse 8 says, "The Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing." It was just a picture; it really didn't do the job. Verse 9, it was only a figure for the time then present in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. In other words, they were pictures and emblems but they couldn't make anybody right with God. They couldn't. It was just foods and drinks and washings and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. That's not Martin Luther, that's Jesus Christ. Those are just emblems and pictures. But when Christ came, verse 11, He was a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once to the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us. "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" And for this cause, He is the mediator of the New Testament, by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, that they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

You know how Abraham got saved? By the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was for Abraham's sin and for David's sin and for the sins of all who ever believed God and looked for a Redeemer in the past, just as for us. Jesus came, and I love what it says in verse 15. He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death for the

redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. He took care of those under the first testament as well as those under the new, or the second. Oh what a great reality.

Down in verse 24, it says: "Christ is not entered into the Holy Place made with hands, which is just a figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf; nor yet that he should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the Holy Place every year with blood of others, for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now (Look at this.) once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He didn't just cover it. What did He do with it? Put it away, put it away. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin was covered and is now put away.

Chapter 10 says the law was a shadow of good things to come. Not the very image, just a shadow. Christ is the very image.

Let's go back and take a final look at verse 8. And so, as we come to verse 8 we come to the second verse of the thirty--second Psalm in which David says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." When I think of that verse, I immediately think of Isaiah 53:10. I think that is one of the most marvelous verses in all the Bible. Listen to what it says. It speaks of Christ in Isaiah 53, you know, wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities, chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we were healed. But verse 10 says this: "It pleased the Lord (You remember it?) to bruise Him, to make His soul an offering for sin." Oh what a great thing.

The only way that God could ever not impute our sins to us was to impute them to someone who would bear their penalty. And that's what He did, and then imputed His righteousness to us. And so, in Psalm 130 it says, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee." And then it says, "That Thou mayest be (the Authorized says) feared." And I would like to suggest the word "reverenced." If you couldn't give glory to God for anything else, you ought to be able to give glory to God for the fact that He doesn't count your sins as yours. Should you not? He forgives and He imputes righteousness to the undeserving and He imputes sin to the undeserving Christ and He does so to manifest His great glory that He may be reverenced. David had committed gross sins and he knew the pain of them and so he knew the blessedness of forgiveness. God is so gracious.

Back in Exodus 34 it says the Lord, Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But who will by no means clear the guilty. If you maintain your guilt, you won't be cleared. It's only when you embrace Jesus Christ.

Felix Jardeo was 60 years old. He lived in the Philippines, way out where nobody else lived. He farmed a simple little farm. And he saved his money for years to buy an ox to help him plow. He finally saved enough money and he went out to look for an ox to buy. You know what he found? That all of the money he had saved was worthless because the government of the Philippines had ordered that all Philippine paper money be exchanged for the new currency called *bagong lipunan* and all savings stashed up in the old currency after a certain date was useless. And so, in 1975 he had a little schoolboy write a letter for him because he couldn't read or write and the little boy wrote to the president. And he said, "After all, Mr. Jardeo is only poor and he doesn't read and he doesn't write and he's just an ignorant rice farmer. Can't you please let his money be good?"

He got a letter back. It said this: "The law must be followed because the deadline for exchanging bills has already passed. The government can no longer change your bills with the new ones; even the president of the Philippines is not exempt from this rule." But, the letter didn't end there. It added this: "However, because I believe that you really worked hard to save this money, I am changing your money for new money from my own personal funds and now you'll be able to buy your ox." And the letter was signed, "Your friend, Ferdinand Marcos, president of the Philippines." The man had no right; the president gave him out of his own funds.

You're in that same position and so am I. All the stuff we've been piling up all our life that we expect to walk in and use to purchase our redemption is useless. And nothing you can do or say is going to make it valuable, but when God sees the hungry heart, He puts His currency to its account. Blessed is the man who has had the righteousness of God imputed to him.

And so, for us salvation is simply believing, believing and nothing more. I close with this. James Proctor wrote this:

Nothing either great or small, nothing, sinner, no.

Jesus died and paid it all, long, long ago.

When He from His lofty throne stooped in love to die,

Everything was fully done. Hearken to His cry.

Weary, working burdened one, wherefore toil ye so?

Cease your doing. All was done, long, long ago.

Till to Jesus' work you cling, by a simple faith,

Doing is a deadly thing, doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly doings down, down at Jesus' feet.

Stand in Him and Him alone, gloriously complete.

It is finished. Yes indeed, finished every jot.

Sinner, this is all you need. Tell me, is it not?

Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You that we are not dependent on our works to be saved, but on Your grace. We're bankrupt like that Philippine farmer; everything we've stashed up is useless to purchase what we so

desperately need. But, O God, we come in faith, pleading the merit of Jesus Christ. Confessing our ungodliness, we ask in the name of Jesus that You would impute Your righteousness to our account, and our sin to His. And we thank You for the confidence that indeed that is what You promise. O blessed are we, whose sins are covered and put away. Thank You, Thank You blessed Father, for we are no more worthy now than we were the day we were redeemed. We are no more worthy in that day when we leave this world to enter heaven than we were the day we were redeemed. We will never be worthy. But we plead the worthiness of Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, who became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. As those of old were told when bitten by the snakes to look and nothing more, no medicine, no works, no self-effort, just to look, so Christ has been lifted up and we look to Him and nothing more. Thank You for justifying the ungodly, sinners of whom I am chief.

While your heads are bowed in just a closing moment, this message is certainly a joy to the believing heart. It thrills my heart to count myself among the blessed, due to nothing of my own merit, but all of His sovereign grace. And we all rejoice in that. I believe our gratitude ought to spill out in a life of utter obedience and worship, And then we know, too, that there are some in our fellowship tonight who do not know Jesus Christ and have not received His forgiveness. How can you choose guilt, the stain of sin, the wages of sin, which is death, the pain and anxiety of impending judgment, the absence of the joy of forgiveness? How can you choose that? Only because the God of this world has blinded your mind, and we call you to come to Jesus Christ as He calls. And He will forgive your sin, past, present, and future, bear all its punishment and give you His eternal righteousness. O what a gift. Blessed is such a man, such a woman. We invite you to open your heart to Jesus Christ.

Father, we pray that when we've dismissed You'll draw to our prayer room those that You would have to come, whatever their need might be, whatever the problem, whether it be Christians or those who need Christ or those who want to join our church family, whatever it is. Someone they want to pray about or pray with, do Your work in every heart for Christ's sake. Amen.

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