

# Journey Into Living God's Way

## LESSON 7 . . . Getting Right With God (Romans 4:1-25)

NOTES

**P**aul is a master teacher who knows the great value of illustrations. Charles Spurgeon said of preaching, "The text is the house and the illustrations are the windows that let the light in." To teach us how to get right with God, Paul uses Abraham as an illustration, letting in the light to reveal **three** things we need to know, beginning with . . .

### The Placement of God's Forgiveness (4:1-8)

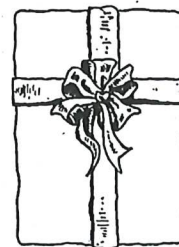
Paul uses Abraham as an illustration because he was the father of the Hebrew race and set the pattern for his descendants and their relationship with God. Therefore, Paul writes: *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God (4:1-2).* In other words, Paul is asking, "Was Abraham accepted by God because of his *works*?" To answer that question, Paul reminds his readers of what fact found in Genesis 15:6, which he quotes in Romans 4:3b?

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This means Abraham was saved just like you and I—through faith in God's promise. Though Abraham didn't have all the details and at age 85 didn't have any children, he believed God's promise that . . . *all families of the earth* would be *blessed* through him (Gen. 12:3b).

Paul continues: *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt (4:4).* When you work 40 hours and at the end of the week receive a paycheck from your boss, is that a gift? No, it is payment for services rendered. So, Paul writes: *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (4:5).* The word translated *counted* (LOGIZOMAI, log-id'-zo-my) means "to put to one's account." Salvation doesn't come with a "do-it-yourself kit" or an installment plan. In the Upper Room the night before He was crucified, Jesus held up the cup. Then, what did He say to His disciples in Matthew 26:28?



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Forgiveness of our sins is deposited, or placed, into our accounts when we

believe God's promise of forgiveness through Christ's death on the cross. Now, in Romans 4:6-8 Paul uses King David to illustrate that the greatest king of Israel understood how God *justifieth the ungodly*. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed to cover up his sin. The Law didn't provide a sacrifice or forgiveness for premeditated sins (Num. 15:30-31), so how could David get right with God? David understood how God justifies, so he prayed a prayer of confession. How did he begin that prayer (Psalm 51:1)?

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To get right with God, we must understand **the placement of God's forgiveness** and . . .

### **The Purpose for God's Laws (4:9-15)**

Paul continues the illustration of Abraham: *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*<sup>10</sup> *How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision* (4:9-10). In Genesis 15, when Abraham is 85, God declares Abraham righteous because of his faith. However, what do we read in Genesis 17:24?

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This means Abraham was not circumcised until fourteen years after God declared him righteous. Therefore, circumcision had no part in Abraham's salvation. Why then was he circumcised? Paul tells us: *And he received the sign of circumcision* (Rom. 4:11a). *Circumcision* was a *sign*, or symbol, of Abraham's salvation, not the cause.

The modern counterpart of *circumcision* is baptism. Baptism doesn't save us or make us righteous; it is a *sign* or symbol we are saved. Baptism is like my wedding ring. My ring doesn't make me married; it shows I am married. What makes me married is my commitment to Virginia. The ring is an outward sign of an inward commitment. That's what baptism is—an outward symbol of an inward commitment to Christ.

Paul continues: *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* (4:12). This means Abraham is the father of everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who is saved by *faith*.



Knowing the Jews would wonder, "If circumcision doesn't save, what about the Law?" Paul writes: *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world* (4:13a). God didn't give Moses the Law until 500 years after the time of Abraham. So, keeping the Law could not have saved Abraham because he didn't have it. Then, how was he saved? How does Paul answer that question in Romans 4:13b?

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Why can't we be saved by the Law? Paul tells us: *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void* (4:14a). If Abraham could be saved by keeping God's Law, there would be no need for *faith* in God's promises, and *faith* would be *made void*. Therefore, Paul writes: *and the promise made of none effect: <sup>15</sup>Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression* (4:14b-15). If there is *no law*, there are no law-breakers and no sinners. For example, if there were *no law* against driving over 70 MPH, I could drive over that speed without being guilty of a crime. However, with that law, if I am brought into court for breaking it, what causes me to be guilty? The law! The purpose of the Law was never to save anybody, but to reveal what fact found in Isaiah 64:6b?

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**Getting right with God** requires an understanding of **the placement of God's forgiveness, the purpose for God's laws, and . . .**

### **The Power of God's Promise (4:16-25)**

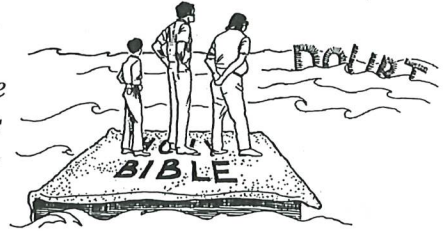
Why does God save us without any help on our part? Because the promise *is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all* (4:16). If our salvation is by *faith* through *grace*, it can be *sure*. If it were based on keeping the Law or doing good works, how could we ever have any assurance? We would always be wondering, "Have I done enough?"

Paul tells us: *God . . . quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were* (4:17b). This means God can do the impossible. It is critical to understand our faith, no matter how strong, will not benefit us if it is placed in the wrong thing. We all have faith, but the issue is, in what? We must place our faith in the God who can bring the dead back to life and speak into being what previously did not exist.



Paul reminds us: . . . *against hope* Abraham *believed in hope* (4:18a). *Against hope*, which means against logic or reason, Abraham *believed* God when all he had to hang on to was God's promise. Though Sarah was barren and well past child-bearing age, Abraham *believed* the impossible would happen.

Though Abraham *considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb . . . He staggered not at the promise of God. . . but was strong in faith . . . being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform* (4:19-21). This means Abraham looked beyond the problem to the promise of an all-powerful God. Faith is a matter of on what you focus. When Peter was walking on the water, why did he begin to sink (Mt. 14:30a)?



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When we focus on our problems rather than God's promises, our faith will sink. Because Abraham focused on God's promise, he waited fifteen years for the miraculous birth of a son. Our greatest test of faith is our willingness to wait. That's why God never gets in a hurry. Faith always waits. That's why the Bible is the story of one person after another waiting on God.

Now, Paul reveals a vital lesson in the life of Abraham: *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; <sup>24</sup>But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead* (4:23-24). This means Abraham's faith is not recorded in the Bible to immortalize him but to be a model for us. We are all justified in the same way as Abraham, by faith. Next, Paul explains *Jesus was delivered for our offences* (4:25a). Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins so we won't have to. Then, *He was raised again for our justification* (4:25b). Jesus' resurrection proves God accepts His sacrifice on the cross for all our sins. As a result, what does Paul declare in Acts 13:39?

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To get right with God, we must understand **the placement of God's forgiveness, the purpose for God's laws, and the power of God's promise.** What is God's promise that allows all your sins to be forgiven?

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