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Living Hope EFC

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"God's means of getting men into heaven has always been by grace. Abraham and David are proof of this." Rom.4:1-8

INTRO: (Sid Stern's testimony, now missionary with Chosen People)

"Dad, Jesus is the Messiah and you should believe in Him."

Sheryl, my 14-year-old daughter, knew I had left the Orthodox training of my grandparents & the slightly more Conservative Judaism of my parents behind me when I had gone to college. I suppose she was a little shocked when I dismissed her good news by saying, 'Forget it. Jews don't believe in Jesus.'

One day about 3 weeks after she first told us about her new faith, Sheryl challenged my disbelief by saying, '*Can you prove Jesus isn't the Messiah?*' To an engineer, 'prove it' is a challenge that cannot be ignored! Could I prove it? You bet I could! I marched to the bookshelves and resolutely removed a yellowed & stiff paged Bible that had been given to me as a Bar Mitzvah gift 37 years before. I perched on a nearby chair, opened the book, and fully expected to turn right to a passage that said, 'Jews do not believe in the Gentile God.' Or at least one that said, 'When the real Messiah comes, there will be absolute peace on earth.'... so that I could say 'I told you Jesus wasn't the Messiah!'

Funny, I was so sure it would be there. *I wondered if Sheryl had somehow tampered with my Bible..."*

That is probably the same response the Jews were having toward Paul in Romans as He was lumping Jews together with Gentile sinners, & saying no one was ever made acceptable to God on the basis of Law keeping.

- **"Paul must be tampering with our Bible!"**

Illustration makes precept believable.

Paul now proves Rom.3:21-31, that God has always counted people righteous—by faith, with two great examples.

Rom.4:1-3 – Example one: Abraham.

Vs.1 "What about Abraham? How did he achieve righteousness?"

Who is Abraham & why is he so important to Paul's argument?

1- Gen.12:1-3 He is the head of the nation, the first "Jew."

Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;

I will **make your name great**,
and you will be a blessing.

- 3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and **all peoples on earth**
will be blessed through you."

ILLUS: Like our George Washington –or founding fathers rolled into one.

- Patriotism, ethnic pride, covenants–Abraham epitomized all of these.
- He was *called* by God. **Through him = blessing to the whole world.**

POINT: No one who called himself a Jew would ever consider himself superior to Abraham, the founder of the nation & source of its blessing!

- As we esteem our founding fathers, even more so was Abraham.

2- Abraham was the greatest example Paul could use in whole OT.

- Abraham is the most mentioned in the NT, of all OT heroes.
- Mentioned 73 times. David 59. Moses 24.
- John 8:33; Luke 3:8. To be a descendant of Abraham = paradise.
- No Jew is going to say he is more righteous than Abraham.
- The **Rabbis** in Jesus' day thought him the most r'ous who ever lived.
- As Abraham goes – so goes every Jew, the Nation!

Book of Jubilees (2nd C.BC) "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life."

- God chose him **because** of his righteousness!

POINT: If Abraham was not righteous on the basis of HIS works, no one was going to be found righteous by his works!

ILLUS: The Jew looked at Abraham much like we look at Paul, or Peter – the founders of our Christian faith.

- If Paul, Peter, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham...were not accepted by God on the basis of works...who of us thinks he can be?

3- **Gen.13:14-15 – The Promised Land** – was promised to Abraham!

Genesis 13:14-16

The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ **All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.**

¹⁶ **I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth**, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted

4- 13:16 – The **Jewish people existed** – because of Abraham!

5- **15:5 – By any standards of human greatness, in the history of mankind, no man equals the stature of Abraham in prominence upon the earth! - 12:3 – "All peoples will be blessed through you."**

Genesis 15:1,5

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.

I am your shield,

your very great reward...

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "***So shall your offspring be.***"

- Abraham is called *God's friend* (James 2:23).

6- In all the Bible, Abraham is the one example whose salvation is definitely declared for us in Scripture: Gen.15:6.

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

- We know exactly how Abraham was made righteous with God.
- **The reason Abraham is so important to Paul's argument – is that the greatest man in all Jewish (and perhaps Gentile) history – was made righteous by God, by faith, and not on the basis of his works!**
- And God – makes a point of telling us this at least 5 times in Bible.

APPLY: NOW – This is a remarkable thing. How would you like to have your name in Holy Scripture – "_____ was justified by faith."

- If God says Abraham is "righteous" before Him, do we doubt it?
- Do you doubt that Peter, Paul, Mary, Moses, Matthew – are "r'ous?"
- On what basis does God accept (declare righteous) these men?
- In **John** 3:16; **5:24**, why does God use the word "whoever?"
- **On what basis is our name written in the Book of Life? Gal.3:6-9.**

Gal.3:6-9

Consider Abraham: "**He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**"

⁷Understand, then, that **those who believe are children of Abraham.** ⁸The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "*All nations will be blessed through you.*"

⁹**So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

Paul can show no greater continuity & unity between the OT & NT means of salvation, than through the example of Abraham.

- **Abraham is the prototype for how all men get to heaven!**

ROMANS 4:2-3 = The answer to Paul's Question.

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- On the basis of flesh, human achievement, natural ability – Abraham could not boast. He had to *trust* God. As Paul did, and we do.
 - Abraham was clearly a sinner, yet God clearly declared him "r'ous."
 - *Even Abraham, God's friend, could not get into heaven without grace*

POINT: All men, from earliest times, are sinners. God does not expect us to be or become perfect – in order to be accepted. He expects us to believe in His provision and promises.

ILLUS: Standing on Empire State Building **Our view VS God's view.**

Lets say you were hired to stand on the Empire State Building and count certain people. Your job: look down and count how many a 5' tall, and how many are 6' tall & how many were 7' tall.

Problem: From such a perspective all look alike.

APPLY: From our perspective on earth, some people look more / less righteous. **From God's perspective, relative differences mean nothing.** All fall short of the righteousness of God. None come close to God.

Rom.4:6-8 – Example two: David

What do we learn from David?

Who is David & why is he so important to Paul's argument?

1: To David's line was given the promise of the coming Messiah:2 Sam.7!

Sam.7

"I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth...'The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.' "

2: David is mentioned second in the NT only to Abr: 59 times - 73 times.

3: Abraham is an example of justification before the Law (600 years).

- David is an example of justification of one living under the Law.
- You can see the astute Jew saying: "But Abr/ wasn't under the Law."
- David lived about 1000BC. The Law was given by Moses – 1400BC.

4: Can you think of a better example of a *believer* practicing ungodliness – and still being counted righteous? (Bathsheba, Uriah)

Rom.4:6 – David learned the same thing Abraham did. God saves a person from his sins, makes the sinner righteous – ***apart from works***.

4:7 – Quote from Psalm 32. Read Psalm. **Rom.4:7-8**

Blessed are they

whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

⁸**Blessed is the man**

whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

- Likely written after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.
- NOTE: **God forgives the worst of sins, by grace, through faith, apart from works.**

4:8 – Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will NEVER (ου μη) reckon his sin!

Barnhouse: In our culture when a man has committed some crime the authorities send him away.

David is saying, "It is a happy man who knows that he is a criminal & who finds that, instead of being sent away himself, he is kept in the place of joy & privilege, & that a method has been

found to send his sins away instead." God has taken away the sin, & the ungodly is made righteous.

Rom.4:4-5 Paul states God's universal principle for righteousness.

There are several important truths/ facts for us to note:

1 – The believer receives a *gift* from God, not what he has earned.

- Paul's illustration exactly contrasts "works" and "faith."
- **"Wages:"** = What a person has coming for work he has done.
- At the end of a week or month, we receive a check from our employer. Have you ever said, "Thanks for the gift?"
- Wages are something earned, our rightful due.
- Now suppose God is your paymaster... What would you earn? **6:23a**

GIFT = *Is something totally unearned.* Something we don't deserve.

- It is paid for by someone else and given to us, freely. **6:23b**
- *Justification* will never be owed to any man! No man will ever be accepted by God as a **moral equal**, and that's what he would have to be to be accepted by his own merit.

2 – Faith is the crucial human response in order to be accepted by God.

- "Faith" is not a work meriting righteousness, it is the *condition* of the will that believes God is telling the truth, & is able to keep promises.
- **Heb.11:6; John 3:18; 8:24**
- It is NOT faith itself – that saves us, but **the object** of our faith.
- It is faith in what God has promised (OT), and in the NT – it is faith in Jesus Christ, because all of His promises issue from Christ's cross.
- God promises nothing – apart from His Son!
- TODAY: "Faith" is used as a kind of magical wand. As long as you *believe* something you'll be OK. But faith is not a vague thing, nor an emotion. It isn't a *leap*. It is choosing to believe specific promises.

ILLUS: Believing in a **\$20 bill** does not make it good. It is worth \$20 because the U.S. Gov't has made a promise & stands behind it. You can believe in Monopoly money...but you'll go hungry.

3- The key word is "logizomai." "To credit to one's account."

(1) Meaning: It is an accounting/ bookkeeping term – meaning to "enter it into the account book."

- It is used 41 times in the NT, 19 times in Romans, *11 times in Rom.4.*
- KJV = Count, reckon, impute. NIV = "credit, credited."

(2) Its significance: God actually credits to our spiritual account divinely valued righteousness when we trust what He says about Jesus Christ.

- **Rom.3:28** "maintain." **4:3,4,5,6,8** "count".

4 – God makes men righteous exactly opposite our natural thinking.

- We naturally think that God wants “good people” to go to heaven. The better we are the better our chances. Every now & then God reaches down and saves a *real* sinner, but He desires good people.
- Rom.4:5 “God justifies the **UNGODLY.**” - 1:18, 3:10,23.

POINT: No one can go to heaven – unless they first confess they are ungodly and in need of a Savior. Then place their faith in Jesus Christ.

- God does **not** justify the one who: decides he is tired of being ungodly, tries to shape up his life, really tries to do better, is wealthy, politically correct, talented or religious. Only the “ungodly.”

NATURE OF GRACE

1 Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfill; and acting of course, righteously – in view of the cross.

Grace, therefore, is uncaused in the recipient: its cause lies wholly in the GIVER, in GOD.

Grace cannot act where there is either desert or ability: Grace does not help-it is absolute, it does all.

There being no cause in the creature why Grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His grace. The discovery by the creature that he is truly the object of Divine grace, works the utmost humility: for the receiver of grace is brought to know his own absolute unworthiness, and his complete inability to attain worthiness: yet he finds himself blessed-on another principle outside of himself!

THE PLACE OF MAN UNDER GRACE

- 1- He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!
- 2- He is not “on probation.”
- 3- Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF MAN UNDER GRACE

- 1-To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.
- 2- To expect to be blessed, though realizing more and more lack of worth.

Newell, *Romans* – 245-47

Will you consent to be loved and accepted by God – while a sinner?