

1. **Introduction**: As we saw in the last lesson, Paul showed verses from Genesis to show that Abraham was saved by grace through faith. Abraham believed God about a seeming impossible promised future. His faith was counted to him as righteousness. Next Paul considers turns David's Psalm 32.
2. ^{NIV} **Romans 4:6-8**: *“David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:*
 - ⁷ *“Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*
 - ⁸ *Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”*
3. **David's Perspective on Righteousness Apart from Works**: David speaks of the blessing of being credited with righteousness apart from works (v.6).
 - Abraham's justification was a consequence of his confident belief in a future savior, a belief which was credited to him as righteousness.
 - Verses 7-8 quote David from psalm 32:1-2 describing the blessed state of those to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.
 - This expression states the result of God's crediting of righteousness apart from works. This is a powerful expression well-suited for use in evangelism.
 - Here is why. The burden of past sin can seem so overwhelming that a person may think their past is beyond redemption. David says, that isn't so.
 - Through the positive blessing of justification, all sins of a believer are placed on Christ. For those “in Christ” no sin will ever be counted against them. The blessing of justification is for all who believe in Christ's salvation work.
4. **Romans 4:9-12**: *“Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father*

of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

- What is the importance of circumcision in salvation? Paul says it is of no importance. Abraham was justified 14 years before he was circumcised.
- Circumcision could not and did not have a causal effect on Abraham’s justification. Abraham was saved by belief not by works or circumcision.
- Abraham is considered the spiritual father of all who are justified – not only of Jews, who are circumcised, but of everyone, even those without circumcision.
- God commanded circumcision, but no one is saved by circumcision nor by baptism, by sharing in communion, nor by any particular ritual or liturgy. These are symbols of spiritual things. For example, baptism is a symbol for spiritual rebirth into “new life” already bestowed in regeneration.
- Salvation is through faith in the completed work of Christ with nothing added or subtracted – either you are saved by Christ or not saved at all.
- That being the case, what is the value of circumcision, baptism, and other rituals?

5. Signs and Seals:

- God gave circumcision as a sign and seal of a spiritual reality.
- Circumcision was a “seal” authenticating what God had done for them but was also a sign they belonged to God’s chosen people
- A sign is an object, event, or quality pointing to something different from and greater than or more important than itself. The burning bush was a sign to Moses of God’s presence.
- A “seal” is used to authenticate validity. For example a seal affixed by a notary to a document authenticates the document’s validity. Seals can also indicate ownership.
- Signs can be seals and vice versa. Some things are both a sign and a seal.
- Baptism is a seal authenticating a person’s identity as a redeemed disciple of Jesus. It is also a public sign of commitment to Him.

- The Lord's Supper is not a path to salvation. It is a reminder of God's grace to believers through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.
- By celebrating the supper, we symbolically participate in Christ's death. It is a ritual to commemorate what He did for us and a reminder of His promise to come again to bring His people to be with Him.
- Individuals are saved by belief in the perfect, finished salvation work of Christ and by that alone.

6. **Romans 4:13-17**: *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.*

- These verses demolish any thought salvation can be obtained by obeying law.
- The Law is man-focused (requiring obedience by human ability), but faith is God-focused (pointing to God's grace in doing for us what we could not do for ourselves).
- Christ saves us from sin and justifies us before God! The Law reveals our sin.
- Salvation is based on faith that God's promise to Abraham has been realized in Christ. All who believe in Christ share Abraham's faith.
- Abraham is the father of all who believe.

7. **Romans 4:18-22**: *“In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning*

the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²² That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

- God gave Abraham faith enabling him to confidently believe God’s promise that, though he was old and childless, he would be the father of many nations.
- For Abraham and all believer’s, life is like a pilgrimage in which every step of the way must be taken in faith, trusting God’s grace and His providence.
- Abraham’s ability to take the steps necessary to realize God’s promise of Abraham becoming the father of many nations, was entirely dependent on God and each step occurred in God’s timing.
- God’s omnipotent power, knowledge, and ability to control the outcome of events would inevitably produce God’s promised result.
- Abraham believed God’s promise in spite of his and Sarah’s old age and their long life of childlessness.
- Abraham’s faith was God-centered. He trusted God as both capable and trustworthy to do what He promised.
- If faith in God were something we are required to generate within ourselves, we would be depending on our power, not God’s.
- But God graciously gives faith enabling believers to live in this uncertain world by trusting His strength and goodness to carry us through.
- Abraham’s faith enabled him to obey God commands, follow where God led, and believe God’s promises even in the face of earthly realities that made those promises seem impossible to realize.
- He believed God even when hope seemed irrational. We are designed to operate on just such faith.

8. **The Nature of Faith**: Consider the nature of faith. Faith divides into natural and supernatural faith. All faith incorporates a purpose. Another way to say this is that faith, whether natural or supernatural, is directed toward realizing a goal.

- Faith is always trust in something or someone associated with achieving a goal. Supernatural faith is trust in God.
- Faith enables action. It is the necessary bridge between a plan and action.

- Faith in something or someone may be strong or weak, but, strong or weak, faith always has a goal.
 - The object of faith is something or someone by which or through which it is believed the goal of faith can be realized.
 - Faith is never “blind.” Faith is grounded in reasons (or perhaps assumptions) that support the belief that faith’s object can bring about the goal of faith.
 - Christ is the object of Christian faith. Believers trust Christ and believe He enables reaching the goal they seek.
 - The goal of Christian faith is right relationship with God and realization of God’s promises regarding salvation and eternal life.
 - Why believe Jesus is the path to a right relationship with God, the path to salvation and eternal life? Jesus gave reasons, as did Paul and many others.
 - There is an abundance of testimony from past and present believers on the good transformation they experience through faith in Christ.
 - Jesus said, you believe in God, believe also in me. He also said we should judge who He is from what Scripture says about Him – He causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the dead to come back to life.
 - Strongly held conviction does not guarantee the validity of faith. It is possible to hold strong conviction based on false evidence.
 - Believing salvation can be earned by good works is an example of a false conviction that is often held with great certainty yet is completely wrong.
 - Conviction that there is no God may be held with equally strong conviction and backed up by seemingly unbiased scientific arguments.
 - Strength of conviction never guarantees truth. Truth or falsehood of faith is found in the object of faith. John 14:6, ***“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***
 - Faith in Jesus is necessary to come to the Father. God gives that faith.
9. **Must Faith be Strong to be Effective:** A Baptist evangelist named Ron Dunn told a story about himself illustrating that what is most important about faith is not its strength or weakness.

- Traveling in the mountains of Colorado one winter, he noticed people ice fishing on the frozen lakes. He decided that he would like to get out on the ice. It might be his only opportunity to walk on water.
 - But he was afraid the ice might not support his weight.
 - He could see people ice fishing without falling through the ice, but he was still afraid it would not support him. He decided his faith in the ice was too weak.
 - He tried to muster stronger faith. But how do you do that?
 - Ron suddenly had a great insight into the way faith works. He realized that no matter how small or great his faith in the ice might be, his faith had absolutely nothing to do with whether or not the ice would support his weight.
 - The strength of his belief could not effect whether the ice was strong enough to support his weight.
 - But strong belief the ice was strong enough to support him would accomplish one thing. It would enable him step out onto the ice.
 - Once on the ice, its properties would determine whether or not he fell through.
 - With that thought in mind, he realized faith in Christ is exactly the same.
 - As the attributes of “good ice” support us, when we believe in Christ, it is His power that saves us.
 - Strong faith makes it possible to take a first step toward Christ, but success or failure in receiving salvation depends only on Christ’s power.
 - God knows we find it difficult to “believe.” In love for us, He gives us the necessary faith to take that first step toward Christ.
 - Regenerated, justified before the Father, and set on the path of sanctification, our faith in the truth of God becomes stronger.
 - That is good because God has set aside “good works” for us to do. Some may involve significant hard work and high risk. Strength of faith in Christ enables us to take on “good works” even when we are afraid and lack confidence.
 - Jesus enables us to persevere.
 - As pointed out earlier, faith divides into natural and supernatural types.
- 10. Natural Faith:** Normal human life cannot exist without natural faith which is trust in things and people.

- Natural faith provides confidence which enables taking action without knowing the outcome of the action or of possible unintended consequences.
- Natural faith enables people to have confidence the brakes on their vehicle will work correctly when needed.
- Natural faith enables trusting the water supply is pure, a doctor will prescribe the right medicine, a pharmacist will fill the prescription correctly, etc.
- Our level of natural faith varies from great to zero.
- We never know for certain what the outcome of an action will be. Every action is initiated in natural faith believing it will produce the desired result.

11. Supernatural Faith: God is supernatural. He created both natural and supernatural creatures and things.

- Supernatural faith is trust in God and His revelation. It is trust God is who He says He is, has done what He says He has done, and will do what He says He will do.
- Supernatural faith is a gift from God. As we think about supernatural faith, it is convenient to separate it into “saving faith” and “sustaining faith.”
- Saving faith is God’s gift to enable belief in Jesus and His accomplishments on our behalf. Saving faith enables receiving the benefits of God’s salvation. Saving faith is once for all time.
- Sustaining faith is an extension of saving faith.
- Saving faith leads to the initial benefits of salvation.
- Sustaining faith is the faith through which God guides our life “in Christ.”
- Regenerated and justified, sustaining faith supports the lifelong process of sanctification in which we are transformed into a likeness of Christ.
- Life in Christ begins with Gods’ gift of saving faith. For all our mortal life our identity in Christ is sustained by faith until we join Christ in heaven.
- As mortal life in Christ continues, our trust and confidence in Him grows.
- Strong faith enables taking actions necessary to do the good works God set aside for believers to accomplish.
- A timid faith with God as the object is infinitely better than robust faith in something or someone other than God.

- In His human nature, Jesus possessed great faith and an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit, as He transforms believers into a likeness of Christ instills an increasing strength of faith, growing steadily more like the faith of Christ.

12. Romans 4:23-25: “*But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*”

- The words about God’s “counting Abraham’s belief as righteousness” was written not only for Abraham but for all believers.
- Abraham heard God’s promise and believed. We have the gospel which is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.
- Abraham looked forward to what God said He would do. We look back to what God has already accomplished.
- What has God accomplished that is such good news to sinners?
- Jesus our Lord was crucified for our trespasses. In Acts 2:23 Peter says, “*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*”
- The point being that Jesus death was planned and approved by God for the purpose of salvation.
- In Acts 13:27-28 Paul says that in condemning and executing Jesus the people of Jerusalem and their rulers fulfilled the words of the prophets.
- Further, the death of Jesus was planned by God to benefit others – that is, it was a substitutionary or vicarious death paying the penalty for our sins.
- The final point is the resurrection. Verse 24 says, “*It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,*” and v. 25 “*Jesus our Lord ... raised for our justification.*”
- “*Raised for our justification*” seems in conflict with Paul’s repeated declaration that we are redeemed by Jesus’ death.
- Paul seems to mean that resurrection is God’s proof to us that full payment for our sins has been made.

- The resurrection clearly proves many things: (1) God is real and the God of the Bible is the true God. (2) Jesus was sent from God, was inerrant in His teaching, and spoke the very words of God. (3) Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. (4) A day of judgment is coming. (5) Every believer in Christ is justified from sin, free from the wrath of God. (6) All who are united to Christ by faith will live again.
- The gospel is the power of God for salvation for all who believe in the finished salvation work of Christ.

13. Transition to Chapter 5: Paul's theme in this letter to the church in Rome is the good news of the gospel about Christ.

- Jesus salvation work satisfied the Law in every regard but, astoundingly, made possible righteousness apart from the Law.
- Through the power of God, righteousness earned by Jesus is credited by imputation to everyone who believes. This imputed righteousness credited to every believer makes them justified (declared legally righteous) before God.
- Justified believers satisfy the Law's requirements because Jesus, as their corporate head, met every requirement of the Law.
- Jesus, who knew no sin, took upon Himself all our sins. On the cross He willingly paid the death penalty and suffered the Father's wrath due our sins.
- There is no greater example of God's love for His people than Jesus' willing sacrifice of Himself to satisfy the Law's requirement on our behalf.
- On the cross, as Jesus received the Father's wrath including being separated from the Father. He experienced the agony of separation He had so dreaded as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Paul has now firmly established the harmony between the Law and salvation by grace through faith.
- He moves on to a deeper understanding about justification by grace through faith answering such questions as: (1.) Will such faith lead to final salvation? (2.) Will this faith function the same way for Jews and Gentiles?

14. What is Next: Romans chapter 5.