

Romans 4

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 18, 2018

Okay. Well, you can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of Romans. As you're doing that this morning, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're in a series called "The Book of Romans in Three Months," where we're looking at the book of Romans in a three-month or 12-week period of time. This is our fifth week in the series, and we plan on going through the month of April. So, you're catching us almost in the middle of the series, but like I told the people last time, we're doing this because we want you to understand the gospel.

If you look in your Bibles, Romans 1:16 tells you the theme of the book. And Paul says there, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation..." That's what the book of Romans is about. It's about the gospel or the good news that Jesus died for sinners and the power of that. The ability of that message is to change lives.

If you think about it, we all need to change. Don't we? We all need to be better at something. We need to be better husbands, better wives, better parents. I'm working on being a better parent. I have a sticker inside my coat right now my son put on me right before I came up here. He was putting one on my back during the prayer time, so I caught him with that, but we need to be better at that, don't we? We need to be better brothers and sisters and friends. Paul says, "This is how you be better in a God honoring way: with the gospel, the power of God that can change you from the inside out."

I was talking with a couple this week who were struggling in their marriage. They were fighting. They couldn't get along. So, I pointed to this verse, and I said, "Let me make this real simple for you. Your problem is that you're a sinner." I said, "The problem that you're having is that you're sinning against each other. If you were sinless, you wouldn't have a problem. If you had no sin, there would be no fight." But the good news is that Jesus died for sinners. Amen? The good news is that Jesus died to help you change. To help you change your marriage, your home, to change everything. That's why Jerry Bridges said, "You should preach the gospel to yourself every day." He said, "You should continually face up to the fact that you're in sin and then take that sin to the cross because that's where the powers is." This is also why the Bible mentions the gospel so much. It's interesting.

If you read through the New Testament, you'll see over and over and over again one thing that jumps out at you is how much it talks about salvation. You would think that the New Testament is written to Christians, and they would find something else to talk about. They would say, "Well, you guys already know that. So, let's talk about marriage, or let's talk about the home, or let's talk about parenting." But the authors of Scripture said, "We can get to that until we get to this." So, this is how you change. This is where the power comes from. It comes from Jesus Christ.

I think a lot of churches today are forgetting this, a lot of Christians are forgetting this. We talk a lot about changing the world and changing the government. We talk a lot about changing our marriages, changing our homes. We talk about changing our churches, changing everything, but

it means nothing if you leave this out. You can't change anything if you don't talk about Christ. You can walk right up to a guy in the street, tell him the gospel. Tell him that Jesus died for sinners, rose from the grave to defeat death, and if he believes that, he will change forever. He will be a different person forever, and you have to remember that. You can't change the world if you don't start with this.

A lady once bought a parrot at a pet store, but she found that it couldn't talk. As hard as she tried, she couldn't get it to speak. So, she took it back to the pet store and told the owner. He said, "Well, did you try a ladder?" She said, "No." So, she bought a ladder, and he still didn't talk. So, she brought him back and the owner said, "Did you try a swing?" She said, "No." So, she bought a swing, and he still didn't talk. So he said, "Did you try a mirror?" "No." "Did you try some toys?" "No." Finally, she brought the parrot back because it died. And the store owner said, "Did he ever talk?" She said, "Yeah. Actually, he did. Right before he died, he said, 'Don't they have any food at that pet store?'" I thought that would make a good parrot joke.

We need to be giving people food this morning instead of toys. Amen? We need to be giving them something that can help them internally. And that is Jesus Christ, for He is the power of God for salvation. You can understand Him as you study the book of Romans, which is what we're doing today at Grace Fellowship Church.

Just to give you some reminder of what we've covered so far, as Paul begins this book, if you look in chapter 1:18, he says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..." In other words, verse 18 says God is angry with unrighteous men. He's angry with those who say there is no God and suppresses His existence. But then to balance that out, if you look in chapter 2:3, Paul says, "But do you suppose this, O man, when you judge those who practice such things and do them yourself that you will escape the judgment of God?" In other words, God is angry with righteous men too. He is angry with those who look down on the people in chapter one and judge them. That's what chapter two is about.

Then if you read in chapter 3:10, Paul sums it up this way. He says, "There is none righteous, not even one." In other words, whether you're righteous or not, whether you identify with the people in Romans one or Romans two, there is none righteous. Verse 11 of chapter three says, "There's none who understands, there is none who seeks God, all have turned aside." That means everybody, the whole world, has sinned against God.

But if you look in verse 21, here's the good news. Paul says, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested in Him." That word "Him" is a reference to Jesus. God's righteousness has now been manifested in Jesus Christ. Jesus has been righteous for us. He has kept the law where we never could, and He is a gift, Paul says. Verse 23 and 24 say, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace." You can have the power of God this morning simply by receiving it as a gift. That's what he says here. They say change is good when you have a dirty pair of socks. And change is good when you have a dirty heart, when you have a dirty soul. You can have that change with the gift of Jesus Christ.

To explain this more in Romans 4, our passage for today, Paul gives us the example of Abraham, the father of the Jews. Early in chapter three, Paul had mentioned the Jews. Now he brings them up again to talk about their father, Abraham. He says, "Abraham was saved by a gift just like you were." He wasn't saved by works, which is important to mention because the Jews had a tradition, which said Abraham was saved by the law, by earning it.

In the Book of Jubilees, they said Abraham was perfect in all his deeds and righteous all the days of his life. In the prayer of Manasseh, they said that Abraham did not sin against God ever. The Jews took that to mean if Abraham could do that, then we can do that too. If Abraham can earn God's favour, so can we. In Romans chapter four Paul says "No, you can't, because Abraham didn't earn it either." He didn't climb his way up to heaven. He was a sinner. He was an unrighteous man, and he was saved by a gift through faith.

To say this another way (and this might be important to get you thinking a little bit about this passage), some traditions are wrong. The Jews had a tradition that said Abraham was saved by works. I don't really know when it started. They probably didn't know when it started, but that tradition was wrong. God never said that. The Old Testament never said. So they needed to reevaluate this. Paul, as a Jew writing to Jews, says, "You guys need to rethink salvation."

I don't know if you guys have ever seen the play "Fiddler on the Roof"? Has anybody seen that? It was about a Jewish family in Russia who underwent persecution for their faith. Towards the beginning of the play, the lead character, Tevye, tells us why they were persecuted. He says it was because of their traditions. He sings the song about it. You probably remember the song. He says something like this. He says, "Here in my home we have traditions for everything: how to eat, how to sleep, how to wear clothes, how to walk, how to talk. We always keep our heads covered and wear a prayer shawl. And if you ask me why, I will tell you, 'I don't know, but it's tradition.'" The Jews thought that way. They didn't know why they thought Abraham was saved by the law. You can't see that in the Old Testament, but it was tradition.

I think a lot of Christians think this way today. You ask them, "Why do you do this"? or "Why do you do that?" They say, "I don't know, but it's tradition." I grew up in a part of the world where if you ask people, "Why are you Baptist?" They'll say, "Because my father was a Baptist and my grandfather was a Baptist. My great-grandfather was a Baptist and his grandfather was a Baptist. The guy at the post office is Baptist. My neighbours are Baptists. I believe what they believe. I am who they are." You don't want to think that way, Paul says, because traditions can be wrong. Nothing wrong with being a Baptist, but you want to think about why you are. You need to test everything by the word of God.

One evangelist said it this way. He says, "God has children, but he has no grandchildren." Which means that if your parents are saved, that's great for your parents, but you must be saved. You must be born again if you want to go to heaven. It has to be personal.

To say this way, Christianity is a thinking religion. I came across a T-shirt recently that said, "Tradition is my excuse for not thinking." You shouldn't not think when you come to church. And Abraham is a wonderful example of this.

Abraham didn't just believe what his fathers believed. He believed what God told him. When he did that, and here's our outline for this morning, Abraham believed four things in order to be saved. So if you're taking notes this morning (this is Romans four) kind of an outline for the passage, Paul gives us four things Abraham believed in order to be saved. Paul is giving us the gospel in the book of Romans. He's showing us the power of God for salvation, and he gives us the example of Abraham. He says Abraham believed more than just tradition. He believed more than what his parents did. He went back to the word of God, and when he did, he believed four things to be saved.

The first one is this. Abraham believed in the promises of God. Abraham was saved by believing the promises of God. I don't know if you know this. I thought this was interesting studying it this week, but there are something like 8,000 promises in the Bible. If you were to count all of them up, the promises of God come to about 8,000 in the Bible. About one fourth of the Bible is prophecy or promises about the future. Here's the neat thing about it, they're all true. Aren't they? Not one of them has ever failed us. It's been said you can't break God's promises by leaning on them, and that's true. Abraham proved that.

Way back in the book of Genesis, Abraham leaned on the promises of God, and he was saved by that. If you read in verses one through three, this is what Paul says. He says,

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Just a few things about this passage. Paul calls Abraham our forefather according to the flesh, or our biological father. Speaking to the Jews Paul says, "You came from Abraham. He was your forefather," And verse one, "What did he find?" (I'm skipping down a little bit), "He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." Verse two says, he didn't boast and works, he boasted in God. We could say he didn't boast in tradition. He boasted in the promises, and it made him righteous.

If you notice that phrase in verse three, "Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness," is in capital letters in your Bibles. That's because it's a quotation from the Old Testament. Anytime you see that in the New Testament, it's a quotation from the Old, specifically Genesis 15:6. It says, "Abraham believed in the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness." If remember the context of that verse, Abraham is an old man in Genesis 15. The next chapter says he's 86 years old, close to the end of his life, near his final days, and he doesn't have a son. He's childless. So he says in Genesis 15:2, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless?" The Lord says in verse five, "Look toward the heavens, count the star if you're able to count them...so shall your descendants be." The next verse says, "Then Abraham believed the Lord, and it was reckoned to him [credited to him] as righteousness."

Now I don't know if you know an 86-year-old man who is expecting a son, but that's pretty unusual, ain't it? You probably would've said if God took you out and showed you the stars in the sky, and you're 86 years old and He said, "This is how many descendants you'll have," you'd probably go find another God, or you would doubt the promise. Abraham believed. He leaned on the promise, and it didn't break. As a result it says, "The Lord credited him with righteousness."

That word "credited" is *logizomai* in Greek. It means to give to someone's account or to transfer funds. It's a financial term. If you've changed banks recently, you'll know they do it by transferring your funds. They take them out of one bank and put them into another. When Abraham believed, God did that with him. He took Jesus' righteousness and he put it in Abraham's account. He took Abraham's sin, and he put it in Jesus' account. There was an exchange. God looked into the future, and He put Abraham's sin on the cross, and He put Jesus' righteousness on Abraham, and He did it on the basis of faith. Abraham didn't earn it. He didn't work for it.

Verses four to five go on to say, "4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness". When you work, you get a wage. You get what is due you. But when you believe, Paul says, you get a credit or a gift. We just had Christmas a few months ago, and some you got a gift card for a present. The idea with a gift card is that it's a promise that it's worth something. It says it on the outside, \$15 to this or \$20 to that, and you take it into the store. and exchange it for goods. God's promise to Abraham was like a gift card, and Abraham exchanged it for salvation.

Verses 6-8 says the same thing:

6 Just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works, 7 blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. 8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.

That's a quote from Psalm 32. But just to unpackage this a little bit, Jesus hadn't come yet, in the book of Genesis. The Messiah hadn't come. He was a long way off, so Abraham didn't know much about Him. He didn't know he would be born of a virgin, die on a cross, rise from the grave. Or if he know all of that, the Bible doesn't tell us. But he knew that God promised him something. He knew that God was going to give him a family. And he believed it, and he was saved by it. Just as the Lord takes your sin and puts it back into the past on to Christ, the Lord took Abraham's sin and put it into the future on Christ and saved him.

Paul's point here is that if God did that with Abraham, he will do it with you as well. If God saved him that way, He will save you that way. You won't be saved by works. You'll be saved by the mercy of God. When the Puritan preacher, Thomas Hooker, lay dying in bed, several friends came to see him and brag about him. He was on his deathbed and his friends were telling him all he had done for them and all he had meant and all his accomplishments for the Lord. One of them said, "Are you ready to go to receive your reward now? Are you ready to go to heaven?" Thomas Hooker in all humility he said, "No, I'm not." He said, "I'm ready to beg for mercy."

Friends, we all need to say that this morning. I don't care who you are, you need to be ready to beg God for mercy. You haven't earned salvation. You're not going to be saved by works. You won't get there by good deeds. You will get there by faith alone. Abraham is a wonderful illustration of that.

We could say it another way. It doesn't matter what stage of life you're in, you will get there by faith alone. In other words, Abraham was 86 years old when he believed. He was an old man past the age when people believed, past the age when they trust in God. A lot of people at the end of their life, they kick up their feet and they pat themselves on the back for their achievements. You can't do that and get to heaven, Paul says. No one is going to get to heaven patting their back. I think it was Steve Lawson who said, "You don't strut through the narrow gate. You come with head bowed low."

J.C. Ryle said it this way. He said, "With the same heart that men die, they will rise again." Let me read that again. That's a frightening thought, but he said, "With the same heart that men die, they will rise again." Which means that if you die in unbelief, you'll rise with it. If you die in doubt, doubting the promises of God, you'll be resurrected that way. This means you have to keep believing no matter what stage of life you're in. You have to trust in God no matter where you are. If you trusted in Him for 10 or 20 or 30 years, you have to trust Him for 10 or 20 more. If you trust Him as a child and as a teenager, then you have to trust Him as an adult and an elderly person. You never come to a point when you stop trusting God.

I think you can identify with this, but the older I get, the more I have to trust, because I don't have another choice. This world is getting worse, amen? I don't know if you guys watched the news this week, but if I didn't have faith, I don't know what I would do it. This week alone, the newspaper talked about another shooting in the States, some murders in Chilliwack, and it said there were 1,400 drug overdoses in British Columbia last year alone. You read all of that and you wonder, what do I do? Well, you trust in God like Abraham did. You read all of that and you say, "Well, what hope do I have?" You have the same hope this man had thousands of years ago. D.L. Moody said, "God never made a promise that was too good to be true." Abraham believed that, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

That leads to the next thing Abraham believed in order to be saved. He believed before he was circumcised. He believed in the promise of God. And he believed before he was circumcised, which doesn't sound like a big deal to us, but we can say it this way: he believed before he did a good work.

The Jews put a lot of stock in the works. Like I said earlier, they thought it saved you, especially the work of circumcision, because it set them apart from other people. Today most boys are circumcised at a very young age. Their foreskin is removed, so it seems strange to make a big deal of this. But in the ancient world, circumcision was pretty unusual. So, to distinguish the Jews from other people, God commanded them to do this, which they did faithfully. They were very faithful with this, but they took it too far and said that it saved them.

For example, the Mishnah, the oral teaching of the Jews, said God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised would go to hell. They actually said that in one of their writings. They also said that Abraham sits at the gates of hell and stops any circumcised Jew from getting in there. To correct this kind of thinking, Paul writes in verse nine. He says,

9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness." 10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; 11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised.

In fact, just to give you some little bit of background on this. Genesis 16:16 says, Abraham was 86 years old when he believed in God. In Genesis 17:24 it says he was 99 when he was circumcised. In other words, if you do the math, there was a 13-year gap between the two events. He believed God for more than a decade before he was circumcised. So Paul says there's no way that would have saved him. That wouldn't even make sense.

To look at this another way (and this is very important if you want to understand the argument of the Book of Romans), Abraham was a Gentile when he was saved. He wasn't a Jew because there were no Jews yet. He was the first one. So, God saved him as an outsider and a foreigner to all the things of Israel.

You can add to this: he was a sinful Gentile like the rest of us. Abraham was a sinner. He did some wonderful things, but on two occasions he lied about his wife, to save his own skin, and he put her in a terrible situation (if you remember the story there). Things could've gone very bad for Sarah. He also committed adultery with his slave woman, Hagar, and then he abandoned her to die in the desert with her son Ishmael. God saved him in spite of that, and He can save you too is the idea here. God saved Abraham in spite of his works.

Verse 11 says, "So that he might be the father of all who believe without being uncircumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them." There you see the word credited again. Salvation can be transferred to anyone's account who believes in Jesus Christ. You don't have to be circumcised first. You don't have to be a Jew first. You can just come as you are. We can say it this way today. You don't have to be baptized first or join a church. You don't have to take the Lord's Supper and memorize Scripture. You don't have to tithe or fast or any of that. You can believe right now and go to heaven.

I was talking with our Care Group about this last week, and we were saying that it's easy to forget what it's like to come to church for the first time. I think you guys can identify with that. But for most of us, we've been Christians for so long, we've been in church for so long that we forget what it's like to walk into a place like this for the first time. But if you did that, you might look around and think you had to do something in order to be saved.

For instance, if you came in here for the first time, you might think you had to have two to three kids and drive a red minivan to get to heaven. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have two to three kids and drive a red minivan? Yeah. Everybody has been shy this morning. There's a lot of

you guys. If I knew that, I would have bought a blue minivan and had five kids just to stand out. If you came in here the first time, you might look around and just think you have to dress up and get a haircut to be saved. You might think you have to shave or hide your tattoos. You might think you have to give money and sing real out and sing on key, because all Christians sing on key, right? Paul says you don't have to do any of that to be saved. All of you have to do is trust in Jesus Christ. Faith comes first. The works come second. Trusting comes first and then you get to the other stuff.

We can say it this way, the power doesn't come from the law. It comes through faith. We've been talking about the power of God, this morning, the power to change. It doesn't come from being circumcised. It doesn't come from giving your money to the church. It doesn't come from driving a red minivan. It comes from trusting in Christ. I bet if I went around the room this morning and asked you guys what changed your life, you would say Jesus, amen? You wouldn't say a red minivan. I mean, come on. That's just silly. You wouldn't say baptism or the Lord's Supper, as wonderful as those things are. You would say Christ.

I also bet if I went around the room this morning and asked you what your life was like before Christ, it'd be shocking. Wouldn't it? I mean, let's just be honest. It would be crazy to think about that. Some of you were alcoholics before you came to Christ. You were enslaved to beer. Some of you were drug addicts. You were enslaved to drugs. Some of you were thieves. You stole from people. Some of you were liars and adulterers. Some of you hurt people. Some of you judged all those people. That's what you were like before you came to Christ.

What happened? What's the thing that changed all that? What would you say? You would say Jesus. You would say He did it. It's all of Him. That's where the power of God comes from. That's where you get the ability to change. You get it through what He did. You don't get it through what you do.

On New Year's Eve many years ago, there was a parade in California. And a large float stalled the parade because it ran out of gas. It sputtered and quit on the middle of the parade and held everything up. The ironic thing about it is that that float was sponsored by the Standard Oil Company, one of the largest gas companies in the world at the time. They forgot to use their own product, take their own medicine.

Paul says you're doing the same thing this morning if you try to be saved by works. You got "Christian" and "Christ" written on the outside of you, but you don't have Him on the inside. If you call yourself a Christian and you trust in Christ, He will change you. Otherwise, you'll run out of gas. That leads to another thing Abraham believed in order to be saved. (And we'll go through these next once pretty quickly).

He believed he was saved apart from the law. This is something that Paul has repeated a couple times, so I don't want to spend too much time on this. But it is an important point, because he's mentioned it several times in these chapters. But Abraham believed he was saved apart from the law because he lived before the law. You guys see the argument? Abraham lived centuries before God gave the law to Israel, so there's no way he could've been saved by it.

Paul writes in verse 13. He says, "For the promise Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Then he says in verse 15, he says, "For the law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation." I won't go into all of this, but the argument is very simple. Not only did Abraham live before the law was written but he couldn't have kept it anyway. Paul says, "For the law brings about wrath." Paul says in verse 14, he says, "For if the promise were of the law, it would be nullified." It would be canceled because you can't keep it.

Verse 13 (just to catch a few things in this passage) says, "The law did not make him heir of the world." That's a reference to Genesis 12 where the Lord says, "And in you, Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed." Paul says the law didn't make that promise. Abraham didn't deserve that. It was given through faith, and salvation is the same way. It's through faith.

Just a side note, I was doing some research on this. (I thought you guys might be interested in this because we're about to eat). But just to show you how much the law meant to the Jews, I looked up to some of the laws on eating for them. (You guys can think about this during the Soup Sunday here in a little bit). But the Talmud, or rabbi's commentary on the law, said there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament, 613 commandments. 248 were positive, 365 were negative. The Talmud, which again is the rabbi's interpretation of this, documents how the Jews added provisions to help you keep those laws. In other words, 613 commandments. In order to help you keep those, they added extra ones.

So, for example, the Old Testament said you had to clean the dishes you ate from. Again, I was looking at foodstuff because we're about to eat. That was a law. You had to clean the dishes you ate from. So, the rabbis added provisions that talked about cleaning earthen dishes and cleaning brass dishes. (There are different laws for those). Then they had laws for cleaning wooden dishes and laws for cleaning glass dishes. If a dish was made by a Gentile, they had laws for that. If it was made for the temple, they had laws for that.

Then (this was the one I thought was real interesting) they go into the issue of washing your hands before you eat. Some of you are going to be really convicted by this, because you don't wash your hands before you eat (that's supposed to be a joke). It's okay if you don't wash your hands, but the Old Testament told you to do that. But to make sure you kept it, the rabbis said you had to wash your hands once to get rid of defilement, and a second time to get rid of the water that touched the defilement. In other words, you had to wash the water that washed your hands. It's just kind of crazy.

It gets better. The first time you washed, you had to let the water run over your wrist, and the second time you had to immerse all the way. But it can only be a small amount of water, half an eggshell's worth. Afterwards, the hand had to be lifted up to ensure water evaporated and went away. The rabbis had arguments about whether you had to do it all before and after a meal or just before. They had arguments about whether you had to wash between the courses. So if you get a four-course meal, some Jews would literally wash their hands four different times during the meal. They argued about whether you had to immerse in a bowl, or something else.

They argued about what would happen if you didn't wash your hands. Some said you should be excommunicated from the synagogue. Some said you should be refused a proper burial as a Jew. Some said your food would turn to filth. Some said you would become a poverty-stricken man, but this is what the law meant to the Jews. These are just the laws for cleaning by the way. You got laws for the Sabbath and the temples, laws for vows.

Paul says all those laws, that emphasis on laws to get you into heaven is wrong, because Abraham wasn't saved that way. He said you've got it all wrong because he was not saved by the law. Verse 15 says, "For the law brings about wrath, but where there is no law," or where you don't try to be saved by the law, "there is no violation." That leads to one more thing Abraham believed in order to be saved. He believed the promises of God. He believed he was saved before he was circumcised. He believed he was saved apart from the law, apart from washing your hands and washing your dishes.

Here's one more thing Abraham believed in order to be saved, he believed as an example for us all. This is what it all boils down to. This is what Romans four is about, Abraham believed as an example for us. Verse one says that Abraham was the biological father of the Jews. But now Paul says he is the spiritual father of all those who believe, which is another way of saying he is our example. We get into heaven the same way he did, through faith.

If you look in verse 16 Paul says, "For this reason, it is by faith in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." Paul says this promise of salvation by faith was given to all of Abraham's descendants, but not only to them, it's given to all those who are of the faith of Abraham, to those who believe like he did. This is the 15th time you see the word faith or believe in this chapter, to remind you that salvation is by faith alone. It's not by works.

Then if you look in verse 22, Paul sums it up this way. He says,

22 Therefore, "it was also credited to him as righteousness." 23 Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, 24 but for our sake also to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

That is the third time you read that it was credited to him (Abraham) as righteousness, to remind you that salvation is a credit. It's a gift. Paul says this was not for his sake, but for ours also. He says, "Jesus was delivered for our transgressions and raised up for our justification," which is another way of saying He died and rose again to save us.

Corrie Ten Boom says, "If you believe in Jesus, God will bury your sins in the deepest part of the ocean and He will put a 'No Fishing' sign on them." Does that encourage you this morning? Is there anybody who would like to see a "No Fishing" sign over your sins? Isaiah the prophet says, if you believe in Christ, He will remove your sins as far as the east is from the west. You really can't get any farther than the east is from the west. An elderly lady was once asked if she was ever tempted to sin and she said, "Yes, but when I'm tempted to sin, I give it to Jesus and He

throws it to the east, and when the temptation comes back I give it to Him again and He throws it to the west." That's what Jesus will do for you this morning, if you put your faith in Him. So will you do that today? Will you trust in Him?

We all need a change. I think that's a self-explanatory statement. We need to be better husbands, wives, and parents. We need to change this dirty pair of socks, but we don't have the power, but Jesus does. Will you trust in Him? Abraham did. He trusted in the promises of God. He was our example, and the promises didn't break for him. They won't break for you either. They'll support you if you rest on them. Let me pray this morning that you'll do that, especially as we come to the Lord's Table.

Father, we thank You for Your promises this morning. We thank You that there are so many of them and, especially not only are there promises in Scripture, but there's examples of people who trusted in them like Abraham. Lord, we thank You for this man of God and his faith. We thank you for what we can draw from it today. May we go out and lean on You the way he did.

Father, we thank You for Christ. If it were not for Your Son, none of us would go to heaven. If it were not for Him, we have nothing to lean on. Our sins are too great, but because of what He has done, we can trust in You and You will put a "No Fishing" sign on them and bury them in the ocean. Lord, may You be glorified in the Lord's Table this morning, and may we have hearts to please you as we take and remember what Christ has done. We pray this in His name, amen.