



Portion:

Title:

## SCRIPTURES

- Romans 4:1-12
- Genesis 12-22
- James 2:14-24

## BELIEF IS AN ACT OF FAITH

- Faith and Belief
- Imputed Righteousness
- The Righteousness of Faith

## SEED:

**“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”** Hebrews 11:1-3 NKJV

**“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who **diligently seek** Him.”** Hebrews 11:6 NKJV

**“...for whatever is not from faith is sin.”** Romans 14:23 NKJV

## FRUIT:

**“For what does the Scripture say? **“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”**** Now to him who

works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” Romans 4:3-4 NKJV

“Was not Abraham our father **justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** Do you see that **faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**” And he was called the friend of God. You see then **that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**” James 2:21-24 NKJV

## **NARRATIVE FOR TODAY’S SCRIPTURES: ROMANS**

**Last week in [The Romans Rollercoaster](#) (Romans 3:21-31)...**

Moreover, now that you realize that even if you make an authentic attempt to satisfy a list of commands in your own strength, it is not the path to true righteousness, and your eyes can open to what the Law and the Prophets were hinting at all along. Everything in the Old Testament was pointing to Jesus Christ (the Messiah Y’shua). Specifically, it is the revelation that true righteousness can only come through Him because every human, when left to their own devices, can’t even come close to God’s standards. No one can meet His demands. In other words, if all you achieve is what you can produce with your own effort, you are a dead man walking.

What Christ did was to justify you, or make you right in God's eyes by way of His own divine power. And this righteousness that is available through the work of Christ is free. When I say it is free, I mean it is free to you, not God; it cost Christ His life. Nevertheless, that selfless demonstration of pure love and righteousness, His willingness to use His blood as a substitute for yours, to cover your sins, was offered at no cost to you. It happens like this. First, it is essential that you recognize God must demonstrate supreme patience, a willingness to overlook your sins in real time, because if He didn't you'd have perished already. This is how it plays out. God's grace must touch your heart and birth faith in you to believe. At the very moment you should be held personally accountable for your transgressions, God imparts Christ's righteousness into your being. And even though justice demands that a God of truth and integrity must punish you for your sin, rather than inflict a devastating consequence upon you, He filters His wrath through your faith in Jesus, who was punished for you. As such, He finds you innocent and allows you to live!

If you are humble enough to acknowledge that without this substitution process you are bound to death, no matter how hard you try, or how much of God's Law you know, or even how committed you are to obey it, then you have a shot. This levels the playing field for everyone. In other words, anyone who might

otherwise brag about his superiority because of some legal knowledge is instantly brought down to the same level as everyone else, once they recognize that working a list of God's commands in their own strength, as a means to eternal life, is a self-righteous disaster, which definitely ends in death. Eternal life can only be attained if you filter God's laws through genuine faith. The conclusion of the matter should be pretty obvious by now. For anyone to be made right in God's eyes it takes this saving faith, which comes as a free gift from God through His grace. It happens independently of anyone's attempt to complete a to-do-list of commands in their own strength. That alone should make you realize that this is the same process for everyone, every Jew and Gentile alike. Are we perfectly clear?

And finally, before you misconstrue everything I just wrote to mean I am advocating that all you need is faith and what I'm teaching completely negates the need for God's Law, let me stop you right here. Faith does not negate God's Law. Faith is what insures you can obey God's Law. Remember that faith in Christ is what the Law and the Prophets were hinting at all along. The message has always been, "Obey God, but don't depend on your own strength to do so!" Later on in this very letter I will describe it perfectly, so it is totally beneficial to introduce here: "For Israel being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their

own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” It was always about grace-empowered-faith-based obedience that would point to the coming Messiah. It just all went sideways when man began to believe he could do it on his own.

**This week in Romans 4:1-12...** Here Paul continues to elaborate on justification, faith, works, righteousness, grace, and circumcision—foundational subjects on which he has already invested a good amount of effort and for which he has built a strong skeletal framework. Now he is going to hang the flesh of Abraham on the bones of these doctrinal essentials. And he will use King David to seal his theological position. There is a lot of repetition here, but it is critical this doctrine is solidified in your mind.

Abraham is the father of faith, promised to father descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens through a son, who would come from his own body as his heir. Paul launches with a question hinting at Abraham’s physical condition at the time he was credited for faith and belief in that promise. He does this to consolidate in our thoughts that faith must always precede action, if it is to be meaningful to God. Later in this letter he will go as far as to say, “Whatever is not from faith is sin.” As such, Abraham’s radical step of faith came before circumcision was ever mentioned. This hardly crosses the minds of God’s people when they consider the events of

the Scriptures, but we must place it right out in the open as part of the sinew that covers the bones of our faith. These are two critical facts. In the flesh, Abraham was neither a Jew, nor was he yet circumcised, when he became the father of the Judeo-Christian faith.

Only after acknowledging these truths can we properly consider what it was that accounted for his righteousness. Paul says it was faith that empowered his obedience, his willingness to believe he would have a son, even in his old age, and that his descendants would fill the earth. Obedience was the byproduct of his faith, not the cause of it. And this idea is subtle, yet instrumental in distinguishing faith from belief. Belief is the first act of faith. Faith fueled his belief. In other words, belief is faith in action. It was his faith-based efforts that made him righteous in God's eyes; faith without the action would not have been sufficient. Again, this is subtle, but the flip-side is also true. If it was his effort, independent of faith, that made him righteous, acceptable to God, then by what he did it might be construed as if God owed him something, instead of what really happened. It was God's grace that fueled Abraham's faith and the action, in this case the belief he would have a son and that his descendants would fill the earth, was the result. In Hebrews, it literally explains that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to Him must believe—faith then

belief! That letter goes on to tie Abraham's faith to his specific responses. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out. By faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac when he was tested.

Think of faith as a noun and believe as a verb! Understanding this process will even change the way you see the "sinners prayer" that Paul later introduces in his letter, "that if you confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart...you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. You see grace-empowered faith (a noun), inspires confession and belief—acts of faith (verbs).

Paul's emphasis here, early in the letter, that it was Abraham's belief that was accounted to him for righteousness (a direct reference from Genesis), is the foundation for understanding what he writes later in the letter, that with the heart one believes unto righteousness. Abraham's subsequent efforts were relative to his belief, his first step of faith in God's promise that he would have a son and that his progeny would fill the earth. James offered this clarification using another of Abraham's efforts fueled by faith, that which defines belief as action; "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" Said more concisely, "Faith without

works is dead!" There must be a literal response associated with your faith, otherwise your faith is not real—faith without belief is dead. Nevertheless, if Abraham's efforts such as: taking Isaac with him; collecting wood for the fire; strapping Isaac to the altar; and drawing his knife to sacrifice him, were fueled under his own strength, then his justification would have been earned, thus eliminating man's need for God. But, it was not under his own power. It was grace-empowered-faith that inspired Abraham's willingness to place Isaac on the altar, and to offer him as a sacrifice as God commanded. It's not faith alone that is accounted as righteousness, it's acting upon that faith.

Then David enters the equation. If you are not working on your own to be justified, but instead concentrate your effort on the only One who does the justifying, even for pagans who start out in the worst condition, you will conclude that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that true righteousness is achieved. David celebrates, in song, the indescribable blessing it is to have your lawless actions forgiven and your sins paid for, instead of the cost being charged to your personal account. Regardless of your individual capacity and discipline, and no matter your level of knowledge and motivation to do the right things, perfect righteousness is that which is imparted to you by God. He imputes His righteousness to you, while He graciously withholds imputing what you really deserve, the



condemnation that comes as the price-tag for your sins. And again, if the faith is authentic, there will be evidence.

And although Paul has already made it perfectly clear on many occasions, again he emphasizes that the blessings just described are available to everyone, not just Jews. Heritage and traditions, and even the commands that come with them, do not confer any special path to God's righteousness. Certainly circumcision is oftentimes used to distinguish Jews from Gentiles, however, if we bring Abraham back into focus, again we see that faith came first. Circumcision came afterwards, as a sign of the faith he displayed—faith in action. Read this aloud so it really sinks in; “Abraham was not even circumcised yet when he was deemed righteous.” The father of faith for all who believe was called by God before circumcision was given for a very good reason. It was so all future generations would know that God's righteousness is available by impartation only, and only to those who walk by faith and who respond with belief. The seal of that faith is displayed with an act of obedience, in this example with circumcision. But obedience is always the response, the sign that faith is real!

*“Think in Bible.” DJH*

## INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S MESSAGE:

*Belief is the first act of faith! Wrap your mind around that. It can be very confusing, so Paul gives us the quintessential example from the Old Testament. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." On the surface it is easy to think this means, "Abraham had faith in God, and his faith made him right in God's eyes." But, there is a critical component missing from that interpretation; faith is a noun and believed is a verb. So, James takes on the responsibility to clarify how faith and belief operate in tandem. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?" You can feel the action in James' interpretation. At first blush it looks very different than Paul's reference to Moses' words. However, when you distinguish the parts of speech, nouns and verbs, it starts to come into focus.*

*When Moses says Abraham believed and James says Abraham was justified by works—both resulting in righteousness, it can't be a contradiction. There must be a viable explanation. James goes on to equate his position to exactly what both Moses and Paul said. "Abraham believed God" is expressed with all the verb energy of "justified by works." He puts an exclamation mark on his interpretation when he says, "And thus the Scripture was fulfilled." What Scripture? Abraham believed God. How was it fulfilled? Abraham was justified by works!*

*This can get very tortuous if we don't define terms, especially since we learned earlier in Romans that, "By the works of the law no flesh will be justified." And here again that, "To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." So, to avoid contradiction, we must conclude that "works of the law" is not to which James is referring. Paul uses "justified by works" in connection to what he previously established: "works of the law" is legalism. James uses "justified by works" to connect faith with belief. In other words, James explains how belief is expressed in an act of faith. From that perspective, James' interpretation is consistent with what Paul teaches elsewhere... "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified." According to James, doing the law, not just hearing about it, is what Moses meant when he wrote, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." In Hebrews we are told that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that he who comes to God must also believe. Belief must follow faith, because God only rewards those who are diligent to obey Him.*

*Even though right here in Romans Paul denies that a man can be justified by works, James does a stellar job explaining the flip-side of the coin, the mishmash of seemingly contradictory information. "Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect. A man is justified by works, and not by faith only."*

*James writes, “by works faith is made perfect.” Paul warns, “but not by the law of works because that would be legalism.” Paul equates the law of faith—works inspired by, motivated by, and empowered by grace, to what James claims is the perfect expression of faith. Paul previously elaborated on the contrast between these two concepts in this letter. You must understand this nuance, even if it takes repeating 10,000 times. It’s critical for a correct understanding of faith. Faith absent belief is dead on arrival because faith is not authentic without the works that testify to that faith. In other words, the noun without its accompanying verb is just gibberish. Maybe in an urban dictionary it’s good grammar—faith can remain just a thought atop the pinnacle of a wonderful intellectual ascent, but for Christians, without the verb you cannot produce a proper sentence!*

## FAITH AND BELIEF

### 1. **“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”**

#### A. **The Father of Faith and Belief**

(1) Abraham is the perfect object lesson...

(a) Works and Belief: terms that must be clarified

1. **“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For **if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about,****

but not before God. For what does the Scripture say?

**“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” [Genesis 15:6]** Now **to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.**” Romans 4:1-4 NKJV

2. Doctrinal essentials using Abraham: justification, faith, works, righteousness, grace, and circumcision (Romans 4:1-12)
  - a) Abraham is the father of faith, promised to father descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens through a son, who would come from his own body as his heir. (See: Genesis 15:1-6)
  - b) Paul begins with Abraham’s physical condition at the time he was credited for faith and belief.
  - c) Faith must always precede action, if it is to be meaningful to God.
  - d) Later he will go as far as to say...
    - 1) “Whatever is **not from faith** is sin.” Roman 14:23 NKJV
  - e) Critical Facts:
    - 1) Abraham’s radical step of faith came before circumcision.

2) Abraham was neither a Jew, nor was he yet circumcised, when he became the father of the Judeo-Christian faith.

(2) Belief is the first act of faith!

(a) Paul gives us the quintessential example from the Old Testament. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

1. "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing **I go childless**, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "**This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.**" Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." {6} **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** Genesis 15:1-6 NKJV

2. On the surface it is easy to think this means,  
“Abraham had faith in God, and his faith made him  
right in God’s eyes.”
  - a) Critical component missing from that  
interpretation: faith is a noun and believed is a  
verb.
  - b) What accounted for his righteousness?
    - 1) Faith that empowers obedience: a willingness to  
believe he would have a son, even in his old  
age, and that his descendants would fill the  
earth.
    - 2) Obedience was the byproduct of his faith, not  
the cause of it.
    - 3) Instrumental in distinguishing faith from belief.
      - a. Belief is the first act of faith.
      - b. Faith fuels belief.
      - c. Belief is faith in action.
    - 4) It was his efforts that made him righteous in  
God’s eyes; faith without the action would not  
have been sufficient.
  - c) The flip-side is also true.
    - 1) If his effort, independent of faith, made him  
righteous, acceptable to God, then by what he

did it might be construed as if God owed him something. *“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”* Romans 4:4 NKJV

- 2) Instead, it was God’s grace that fueled Abraham’s faith and \*belief was the result. (\*the action, belief he would have a son and that his descendants would fill the earth.)

### (3) Faith in Action

#### (a) Belief must follow faith...

1. **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”** Hebrews 11:6 NKJV
2. **“By faith Abraham obeyed** when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going [Genesis 12:1-4]. **By faith he dwelt in the land of promise** as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. **By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive**



**seed** [Genesis 18:1-15], and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised [Genesis 21:1-6].

Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.”

Hebrews 11:8-12 NKJV

3. “**By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac** [Genesis 22:1-19], and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” Hebrews 11:17-19 NKJV
4. Abraham’s specific response to faith.
  - a) Hebrews literally explains that without faith it is impossible to please God, for **he who comes to Him must believe**—faith then belief!
  - b) Belief must follow faith because God only rewards those who are diligent to obey Him. Notice the actions connected to His faith!
    - 1) By faith Abraham **obeyed** when he was called to go out.

- 2) By faith Abraham **dwelt** in the land of promise.
- 3) By faith Abraham, when tested, **offered** up Isaac.

(b) Notice the actions connected to faith!

1. “For **by grace you have been saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the **gift** of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand **that we should walk in them**.” Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV
2. “Therefore, **having been justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through **whom also we have access by faith into this grace** in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2 NKJV
3. “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those **who have obtained like precious faith** with us **by the righteousness of our God** and Savior Jesus Christ:” II Peter 1:1 NKJV
4. “But also for this very reason, **giving all diligence, add to your faith** virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly

kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For **if these things are yours** and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For **he who lacks these things** is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, **for if you do these things** you will **never stumble;**" II Peter 1:5-10 NKJV

5. Think of faith as a noun and believe as a verb!
  - a) Grace imparts the free gift of faith. Then you need to practice that faith to walk in obedience (good works).
  - b) You are justified by free faith and then you practice that faith to gain continual access to God's grace.
  - c) Saving faith comes through Christ's righteousness alone; then you must add to that faith, because if you don't, you will stumble!
- (c) Understanding this process will even change the way you see the "sinners prayer."
  1. "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the **heart**

**one believes unto righteousness**, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9-10 NKJV

2. Authentic faith is always followed by a sign, an action (in this case confession).
  - a) “If you confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart...you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
  - b) Grace-empowered faith (the noun), inspires confession and belief, the act of faith (the verb).

**B. James takes on the responsibility to clarify how faith and belief operate in tandem.**

(1) Belief: faith in action!

- (a) “Was not Abraham our father **justified by works** when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?”

1. “What does it profit, my brethren, **if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?** If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” **but you do not give** them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? **Thus also faith by itself, if it does not**

**have works, is dead.** But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe [have faith]—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** Do you see that **faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?** And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, **“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness [Genesis 15:6].”** And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” James 2:14-24 NKJV

2. James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief. “Works of the law” is not to which James is referring.
  - a) Earlier in Romans: “By the works of the law no flesh will be justified.” (Romans 3:20)

- b) Here in Romans: “To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” (Romans 4:4)
- c) Paul uses “justified by works” in connection to what he previously established: “Works of the law” is legalism. (See [Vernacular](#))
- d) James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief.
  - 1) Belief is the first act of faith.
  - 2) From this perspective, James’ interpretation is consistent with what Paul teaches... *“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the **doers of the law** will be justified.”* (Romans 2:13)
  - 3) According to James, doing the law is what Moses meant when he wrote, *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:6)
- e) James does a stellar job explaining this.
  - 1) *“Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**”* (James 2:18)

2) *“Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect. A man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”* (James 2:22-24)

3) Even though here in Romans, Paul denies that a man can be justified by works. (Romans 4:2)

f) Context

1) James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief. James explains how belief is expressed in an act of faith.

2) Faith absent belief is dead on arrival because faith is not authentic without the works that testify to that faith.

3) Paul uses “justified by works” in connection to what he previously established: “works of the law” is legalism.

g) Paul calls what James explains as the perfect expression of faith, the law of faith—works inspired by, motivated by, and empowered by grace.

1) Paul previously elaborated on the contrast between these concepts in this letter. (See [Vernacular](#))

- 2) See also [The Romans Rollercoaster](#) and Sermon Notes specifically Pages 29-33 on The Law of Works vs. The Law of Faith
3. Moses says Abraham believed; James says Abraham was justified by works—both resulting in righteousness.
  - a) James equates “justified by works” to exactly what both Moses and Paul said, “Abraham believed God...”
  - b) An exclamation mark on his interpretation, “And thus the Scripture was fulfilled.”
    - 1) What Scripture? Abraham believed God.
    - 2) How was it fulfilled? Abraham was justified by works
- (b) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness?
  1. “that if you **confess** with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe** in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the **heart one believes unto righteousness**, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9-10 NKJV
  2. Faith, then confess and believe...



- a) Paul's emphasis that it was Abraham's belief that was accounted to him for righteousness, is the foundation of this understanding later in the letter, and of course is a direct reference from Genesis 15:6.
- b) Clearly, Abraham's subsequent efforts were relative to his belief, his first step of faith in God's promise that he would have a son and that his progeny would fill the earth [Genesis 15:1-6].
- c) James offered this clarification using another of Abraham's efforts fueled by faith, that which defines belief as action:
  - 1) *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"*  
(James 2:21-22 referring to Genesis 22:1-19)
  - 2) Said more concisely, "Faith without works is dead!" There must be a literal response associated with your faith, otherwise your faith is not real—faith without belief is dead.
  - 3) Nevertheless, if Abraham's efforts such as: taking Isaac with him; collecting wood for the

fire; strapping Isaac to the altar; and drawing his knife to sacrifice him, were fueled under his own strength, then his justification would have been earned, thus eliminating man's need for God. *"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."* (Romans 4:4)

- 4) But, it was not under his own power. It was grace-empowered-faith that inspired Abraham's willingness to place Isaac on the altar, and to offer him as a sacrifice as God commanded.
- 5) *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*
- 6) It's not faith alone that is accounted as righteousness; it is acting upon that faith.

(2) For the law to be established, it must be wrapped in faith.

- (a) There is no better way to understand the context of Romans 4 than to emphatically restate how we ended Chapter 3. You simply can't develop sound doctrine from small, out-of-context bits of Scripture. It is helpful to remember what Paul said elsewhere on the topic.

1. "Do we then make void the law through faith?  
Certainly not! **On the contrary, we establish the law.**" Romans 3:31 NKJV

2. The law is practiced by the practice of faith!

*“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

- a) This will help to keep our theology consistent and protect us from becoming Christians who use isolated soundbites to develop doctrinal beliefs.
- b) Obedience by faith is Paul’s message throughout his writings and is the delicate balance he displays throughout the Romans rollercoaster of law and grace.
- c) So, he emphatically states that the law is NOT made void by faith, but then again reintroduces the idea that works without faith are of no value.
- d) Abraham did put Isaac on the altar, a work for sure (see James), but he did it in faith that Yahweh would still make him the father of many nations

(3) It was that action mixed with faith that made him righteous.

(a) Paul gives more details on this concept in Galatians 3

- 1. “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the **works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, **does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** Therefore know that only **those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, **“In you all the nations shall be blessed.”** So then **those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, **“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”** But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for **“the just shall live by faith.”** Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”” Galatians 3:2-12 NKJV

2. Why are works of law a curse? And why is “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” not works of law?

- a) Because: *“Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, **to do them.**”* (Referring to Deut. 27:26)
  - 1) Curses are for those who don’t do the law.
  - 2) Works of law is defined as “not doing the law!”
  - 3) Therefore, if you are of works of the law and not a doer of the law, curses await.
- b) And because: *“The man who does them shall live by them.”*
  - 1) Don’t get involved in any of those pagan activities of Egypt or Canaan.
  - 2) Do obey Yahweh’s laws and walk in them!
  - 3) If you do, you will have life (and not death)!  
(Referring to Leviticus 18:5)
- c) Moses knew what it meant and so does Paul...  
*“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:6).
  - 1) See [Vernacular Sermon Notes](#) (Pages 43-50) for a detailed explanation

**C. Let’s revisit what James says on the topic...**

- (1) It brings the perfect understanding to what it means to establish the law by faith (Romans 3:31), to make it stand firm.

- (a) Notice how James distinguishes “earned righteousness” that comes from works, from “imputed righteousness” that comes from faith, using the very same scripture about Abraham.
- (b) The “works of law” that Paul is against is the legalism.
- (c) We’ve already defined and discussed this at length. (See [Vernacular](#))
- (d) But Paul, no doubt, tells us elsewhere that we are saved for “good works” (faith-based obedience).
  - 1) *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus FOR GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand that we should WALK IN THEM.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)*
- (e) James speaks of good works, like clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, both inspired by faith. Yahshua said, “Love your neighbor.” There’s no love in a faith that watches someone go hungry.
- (f) Yet, those good deeds are merely filthy rags without faith (Isaiah 64:6).
- (g) We must understand that the only way a sinner can approach Yahweh is through repentance and faith. Like

King David to whom Paul will refer in Romans 4:5-8, so poignantly declared in Psalm 32, and as Paul so eloquently states in Ephesians 2.

- (h) However, once we are saved by His grace, it is mandated that we walk in the good works that He has prepared for us.
  - 1) The heart (mind) change takes place first and then the physical action.
  - 2) If we think we can go directly to “obeying the law” without first having faith, then we have a bleak and dark future ahead of us
- (i) What good works are those? Obeying Yahweh's commands! Otherwise your declaration of faith is just a mental ascent and has no real substance.
- (j) Yahshua said it like this, *“You will be known as a disciple by your fruit.” (Matthew 7:16-20)* The question then remains: is your fruit sweet and juicy or spoiled and rotten?
- (k) Test it!
  - 1) “Now **godliness with contentment** is great gain.” I Timothy 6:6 NKJV
- (2) Imputed vs Practiced
  - (a) Imputed Righteousness vs. Practiced Righteousness

1. Imputed: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**" II Corinthians 5:21 NKJV
2. Practiced: "He who **practices righteousness is righteous**, just as He is righteous." I John 3:7 NKJV
3. The Error: "For they **being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness**, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [goal] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Romans 10:3-4 NKJV

(b) Imputed Faith vs. Practiced Faith

1. Imputed: "To those who have obtained like precious **faith** with us **by the righteousness of our God** and Savior Jesus Christ:" II Peter 1:1 NKJV
2. Practiced: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, **add to your faith** virtue, to virtue knowledge," II Peter 1:5 NKJV
3. The Error: "But **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God **must believe** that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6 NKJV

(c) Imputed Godliness vs. Practiced Godliness



1. Imputed: “Behold what manner of love the Father **has bestowed on us**, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not **yet been revealed what we shall be**, but we know that when He is revealed, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is.” I John 3:1-2 NKJV
2. Practiced: “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and **exercise yourself toward godliness**. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” I Timothy 4:7-8 NKJV
3. The Error: “having **a form of godliness but denying its power**. And from such people turn away!” II Timothy 3:5 NKJV

#### **D. Highlights in the Life of Abraham**

(1) See Genesis 12-22

(a) Go!

1. “Now the Lord had said to Abram: “**Get out of your country**, From your family And from your father’s house, **To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your**

**name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**" So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran." Genesis 12:1-4 NKJV

(b) Blessed by Melchizedek.

1. "Then **Melchizedek** king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. **And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram** of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all." Genesis 14:18-20 NKJV

(c) The Covenant.

1. "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing **I go childless**, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my

house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, **"This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."** Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." {6} **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** Genesis 15:1-6 NKJV

(d) Affirmation

1. "Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "Lord God, **how shall I know that I will inherit it?"** So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." **Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle,** and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

Then He said to Abram: **“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.** And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, **you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.** But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. **On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land,** from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.””

Genesis 15:7-21 NKJV

(e) The Covenant and Name Change.

1. “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty

God; walk before Me and be blameless. And **I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.**” Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and **you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.** I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. **And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants** after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”” Genesis 17:1-8 NKJV

(f) Circumcision—a sign of the covenant!

1. “And God said to Abraham: **“As for you, you shall keep My covenant,** you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you**

**and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.**

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and **My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.**

And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. **And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations;** kings of peoples shall be from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And

Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" Then God said: "No, **Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.**" Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham." Genesis 17:9-22 NKJV

(g) Abraham circumcised at 99 years old.

1. "So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. **Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.** And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. **That very same day Abraham**

**was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;** and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.”

Genesis 17:23-27 NKJV

(h) The Son of Promise.

1. “Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, **“My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.** Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.” So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.” And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk



and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, **Sarah your wife shall have a son.**"

(Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) **Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.** Therefore **Sarah laughed** within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' **Is anything too hard for the Lord?** At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"" Genesis 18:1-15 NKJV

(i) Isaac is Born.

1. "And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. **For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son** in his old age, at

the set time of which God had spoken to him. And **Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.** Then **Abraham circumcised his son Isaac** when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.”” Genesis 21:1-6 NKJV

- (j) Abraham’s Faith in Action (the Sacrifice of Isaac).
1. “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, **“Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”** Then He said, **“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”** So **Abraham** rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, **“Stay here with**

**the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."** So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, **"Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"** And Abraham said, **"My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."** So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And **Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.** But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, **"Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."** Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram

caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, **The-Lord-Will-Provide**; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: **“By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”** So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” Genesis 22:1-19 NKJV

(2) A Genealogical Look at Abraham

(a) The father of many nations!

1. Abram (exalted father, covenant Genesis 15)
2. Renamed Abraham (Genesis 17:4-5. Circumcision as a sign, vv. 10-11. Promise of Isaac, v. 16)

3. Isaac, son of Abraham (seed of promise fulfilled Genesis 21, then faith tested Genesis 22)
  4. Jacob, son of Isaac (Genesis 25:26, Jacob I loved; Esau I hated, Rom. 9:13)
  5. Jacob, renamed Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:10, one who overcomes with the Almighty)
  6. Israel (had 12 sons, become tribes of Israel, Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-18, 22-26)
  7. Joseph (11th son/tribe, Genesis 35:24, who saved the lives of all brothers/tribes in Egypt, Genesis 37-50)
  8. Levi (3rd son/tribe, Genesis 35:23, given priestly duties. Note: Judah was the 4th son)
  9. Moses (came from Levi, Exodus 2:1-10)
  10. Then Passover-Exodus-Freedom-Mount Sinai—The Law (Book of Exodus)
- (b) The sojourn of Israel (430 years) \*including the Exodus and years in Canaan.
1. “Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was **four hundred and thirty years.**” Exodus 12:40 NKJV
  2. “Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not

theirs, and will serve them, and they **will afflict them four hundred years.**" Genesis 15:13 NKJV

3. "And this I say, that the law, which was **four hundred and thirty years later**, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect." Galatians 3:17 NKJV

(3) \* The timeline of the 430 years includes all the years from the call of Abraham to the Exodus.

(a) **A deep sleep fell upon Abram:** (Genesis 15:12-21)

1. **Amazing Prophetic Moment:** It is revealed that his descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own, and that they will serve their captors, and that they will be afflicted four hundred years.

a) This is prophetic of Israel being sent into foreign lands. It is important to note that they were strangers in a foreign land for 400 years and that is the totality of their affliction (not just their 80 years as slaves in Egypt under heavy burdens.)

b) **Timeline:** it is 64 years from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses. So, during those 64 years the people are 'guests' in Egypt and not 'slaves' and are multiplying rapidly in numbers, and it is when the new Pharaoh, who does not know Joseph,

takes over (Exodus 1:8) that the captivity (hard labor) begins. This is right before the birth of Moses when Pharaoh orders the death of all newborn boys (that is why Moses was hidden). That would mean the hard labor (affliction) lasts for 80 years, the age Moses is when he is called back to Egypt to free the people. So, you can see that the affliction begins right before the birth of Moses and ends at the exodus when Moses is 80. There are 144 years between the death of Joseph and the Exodus.

- c) Click [here](#) to read more details about the math regarding the number of years of affliction.

## IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

### 2. Righteousness Apart from Works

#### A. The Blessing of Imputed Righteousness

(1) With repentance Yahweh does not impute iniquity; with repentance Yahweh does impute righteousness.

(a) Belief is the work of faith.

1. “But **to him who does not work but believes** on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as **David also describes the**

**blessedness of the man to whom God imputes**

**righteousness apart from works:** *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”* Romans 4:5-8 NKJV

2. David enters the equation.

- a) Paul uses King David to seal his theological position.
- b) If you are not working on your own to be justified, but instead concentrate your effort on the only One who does the justifying, even for pagans who start out in the worst condition, you will conclude that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that true righteousness is achieved.

(2) Imputed righteousness is free and puts you in right standing with Yahweh; earned righteousness has a cost and comes from what you do with that right standing.

- (a) David celebrates, in song, the indescribable blessing it is to have our lawless actions forgiven and our sins paid for, instead of the cost being charged to our personal account.

1. **“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom**



**the Lord does not impute iniquity,** And in whose spirit there is no deceit.” Psalms 32:1-2 NKJV

- a) Regardless of our individual capacities and disciplines, and no matter our level of knowledge and motivation to do the right things, perfect righteousness is that which is imparted to us by God.
- b) He imputes His righteousness to us, while He graciously withholds imputing what we really deserve, the condemnation that comes as the price-tag for our sins. And again, if the faith is authentic, there will be evidence.
- c) Paul draws from King David’s experience as recorded in Psalm 32:1-2. This Psalm is likely inspired by David’s history with Bathsheba. He’s contemplating his sin, iniquity, transgression, all words that speak of violations against God’s laws.
- d) For David, the offenses were serious: lust, abuse of power, adultery, causing another to sin, and premeditated murder.
- e) And yet, the penalty for sin is not imputed when there is genuine repentance.

- f) Paul, as is his custom, brings us clarity from the words he draws from the Old Testament. The Psalm tells us that with repentance Yahweh does not impute iniquity; Paul tells us that with repentance Yahweh does impute righteousness.
- g) Throughout the Scriptures we can recognize two types of righteousness, imputed and earned. Imputed righteousness is free and puts you in right standing with Yahweh; earned righteousness has a cost and comes from what you do with that right standing. Do you obey or not?
- h) To paraphrase what Yahweh also says in the same Psalm, *"I will instruct you in My ways; follow them, don't be like a stubborn mule!"* (vv. 8, 9) This means you just can't repent and then go back to doing your own thing. Your faith must be mixed with obedience.

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

### 3. The Father of All Who Believe

#### A. While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?

- (1) Faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.
  - (a) How then was it accounted?

1. **“Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?**  
For we say that **faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted?** While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And **he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be **the father of all those who believe**, though they are uncircumcised, **that righteousness might be imputed to them also**, and **the father of circumcision** to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who **also walk in the steps of the faith** which our father Abraham had **while still uncircumcised.**” Romans 4:9-12 NKJV
2. His righteousness is accounted for by belief?
  - a) Although Paul has already made it perfectly clear on many occasions, again he emphasizes that the blessings just described are available to everyone, not just Jews.
  - b) Heritage and traditions, and even the commands that come with them, do not confer any special path to God’s righteousness.

- c) Certainly circumcision is oftentimes used to distinguish Jews from Gentiles, however, if we bring Abraham back into focus, again we see that faith came first.
- d) Circumcision came afterwards, as a sign of the faith he displayed—faith in action.
- e) Abraham was not even circumcised yet when he was deemed righteous.
- f) The father of faith for all who believe was called by God before circumcision was given for a very good reason.
  - 1) It was so all future generations would know that God's righteousness is available by impartation only, and only to those who walk by faith and who respond with belief.
  - 2) The seal of that faith is displayed with an act of obedience, in this example with circumcision. But obedience is always the response, the sign that faith is real!

(2) The seal of faith...

(a) A sign of the covenant!

1. **"This is My covenant which you shall keep,** between Me and you and your descendants after you: **Every**

**male child among you shall be circumcised;** and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and **it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.”** Genesis 17:10-11 NKJV

(b) How, remember...true circumcision is that of the heart!

1. “For **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Romans 2:28-29 NKJV
2. Abraham had faith and then was made righteous by belief, which led to (faith-based obedience), which resulted in circumcision.
  - a) He was not circumcised first, and so it is with everyone. The heart (mind) change takes place first and then the physical action.
  - b) Obeying the Law does not establish the heir. Faith does! We are the seeds of Abraham through faith.
  - c) And if we think we can go directly to “obeying the law” without first having faith, then we have a bleak and dark future ahead. Doing so would be telling Yahweh that we don’t need His promises;

- we can do it on our own. That would be bad because the Law without faith brings destruction.
- d) The grace of Yahweh is what empowers us to obey Him; the Law was given to show us that we would always fall short without it.
  - 1) See [Circumcision Reimagined](#)
  - e) The story continues... *“and being **fully convinced** that what He had promised He was also able to perform. **And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”**”* Romans 4:21-22 NKJV

## Summary: FAITH AND BELIEF

### 1. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

#### A. The Father of Faith and Belief

- (1) Abraham is the perfect object lesson...
  - (a) Works and Belief: terms that must be clarified
    - 1. Doctrinal essentials using Abraham: justification, faith, works, righteousness, grace, and circumcision (Romans 4:1-12)
    - a) Abraham is the father of faith, promised to father descendants as numerous as the stars in the

heavens through a son, who would come from his own body as his heir. (See: Genesis 15:1-6)

b) Paul begins with Abraham's physical condition at the time he was credited for faith and belief.

c) Faith must always precede action, if it is to be meaningful to God.

d) Later he will go as far as to say...

1) "Whatever is **not from faith** is sin." Roman 14:23 NKJV

e) Critical Facts:

1) Abraham's radical step of faith came before circumcision.

2) Abraham was neither a Jew, nor was he yet circumcised, when he became the father of the Judeo-Christian faith.

(2) Belief is the first act of faith!

(a) Paul gives us the quintessential example from the Old Testament. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

1. On the surface it is easy to think this means, "Abraham had faith in God, and his faith made him right in God's eyes."

- a) Critical component missing from that interpretation: faith is a noun and believed is a verb.
- b) What accounted for his righteousness?
  - 1) Faith that empowers obedience: a willingness to believe he would have a son, even in his old age, and that his descendants would fill the earth.
  - 2) Obedience was the byproduct of his faith, not the cause of it.
  - 3) Instrumental in distinguishing faith from belief.
    - a. Belief is the first act of faith.
    - b. Faith fuels belief.
    - c. Belief is faith in action.
  - 4) It was his efforts that made him righteous in God's eyes; faith without the action would not have been sufficient.
- c) The flip-side is also true.
  - 1) If his effort, independent of faith, made him righteous, acceptable to God, then by what he did it might be construed as if God owed him something. *"Now to him who works, the wages*



*are not counted as grace but as debt.” Romans 4:4 NKJV*

- 2) Instead, it was God’s grace that fueled Abraham’s faith and \*belief was the result. (\*the action, belief he would have a son and that his descendants would fill the earth.)

### (3) Faith in Action

#### (a) Belief must follow faith...

##### 1. Abraham’s specific response to faith.

- a) Hebrews literally explains that without faith it is impossible to please God, for **he who comes to Him must believe**—faith then belief!
- b) Belief must follow faith because God only rewards those who are diligent to obey Him. Notice the actions connected to His faith!
  - 1) By faith Abraham **obeyed** when he was called to go out.
  - 2) By faith Abraham **dwelt** in the land of promise.
  - 3) By faith Abraham, when tested, **offered** up Isaac.

#### (b) Notice the actions connected to faith!

1. Think of faith as a noun and believe as a verb!

- a) Grace imparts the free gift of faith. Then you need to practice that faith to walk in obedience (good works).
  - b) You are justified by free faith and then you practice that faith to gain continual access to God's grace.
  - c) Saving faith comes through Christ's righteousness alone; then you must add to that faith, because if you don't, you will stumble!
- (c) Understanding this process will even change the way you see the "sinners prayer."
1. Authentic faith is always followed by a sign, an action (in this case confession).
    - a) "If you confess with your mouth...and believe in your heart...you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
    - b) Grace-empowered faith (the noun), inspires confession and belief, the act of faith (the verb).

**B. James takes on the responsibility to clarify how faith and belief operate in tandem.**

- (1) Belief: faith in action!
  - (a) "Was not Abraham our father **justified by works** when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?"

1. James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief. “Works of the law” is not to which James is referring.
  - a) Earlier in Romans: “By the works of the law no flesh will be justified.” (Romans 3:20)
  - b) Here in Romans: “To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” (Romans 4:4)
  - c) Paul uses “justified by works” in connection to what he previously established: “Works of the law” is legalism. (See [Vernacular](#))
  - d) James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief.
    - 1) Belief is the first act of faith.
    - 2) From this perspective, James’ interpretation is consistent with what Paul teaches... *“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the **doers of the law** will be justified.”* (Romans 2:13)
    - 3) According to James, doing the law is what Moses meant when he wrote, *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:6)

- e) James does a stellar job explaining this.
  - 1) *“Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**”* (James 2:18)
  - 2) *“Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect. A man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”* (James 2:22-24)
  - 3) Even though here in Romans, Paul denies that a man can be justified by works. (Romans 4:2)
- f) Context
  - 1) James uses “justified by works” to connect faith with belief. James explains how belief is expressed in an act of faith.
  - 2) Faith absent belief is dead on arrival because faith is not authentic without the works that testify to that faith.
  - 3) Paul uses “justified by works” in connection to what he previously established: “works of the law” is legalism.
- g) Paul calls what James explains as the perfect expression of faith, the law of faith—works

inspired by, motivated by, and empowered by grace.

- 1) Paul previously elaborated on the contrast between these concepts in this letter. (See [Vernacular](#))
  - 2) See also [The Romans Rollercoaster](#) and Sermon Notes specifically Pages 29-33 on The Law of Works vs. The Law of Faith
2. Moses says Abraham believed; James says Abraham was justified by works—both resulting in righteousness.
- a) James equates “justified by works” to exactly what both Moses and Paul said, “Abraham believed God...”
  - b) An exclamation mark on his interpretation, “And thus the Scripture was fulfilled.”
    - 1) What Scripture? Abraham believed God.
    - 2) How was it fulfilled? Abraham was justified by works
- (b) For with the heart one believes unto righteousness?
1. Faith, then confess and believe...
    - a) Paul’s emphasis that it was Abraham’s belief that was accounted to him for righteousness, is the

foundation of this understanding later in the letter, and of course is a direct reference from Genesis 15:6.

- b) Clearly, Abraham's subsequent efforts were relative to his belief, his first step of faith in God's promise that he would have a son and that his progeny would fill the earth [Genesis 15:1-6].
- c) James offered this clarification using another of Abraham's efforts fueled by faith, that which defines belief as action:
  - 1) *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"*  
(James 2:21-22 referring to Genesis 22:1-19)
  - 2) Said more concisely, "Faith without works is dead!" There must be a literal response associated with your faith, otherwise your faith is not real—faith without belief is dead.
  - 3) Nevertheless, if Abraham's efforts such as: taking Isaac with him; collecting wood for the fire; strapping Isaac to the altar; and drawing his knife to sacrifice him, were fueled under his

own strength, then his justification would have been earned, thus eliminating man's need for God. *"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."* (Romans 4:4)

4) But, it was not under his own power. It was grace-empowered-faith that inspired Abraham's willingness to place Isaac on the altar, and to offer him as a sacrifice as God commanded.

5) *"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

6) It's not faith alone that is accounted as righteousness; it is acting upon that faith.

(2) For the law to be established, it must be wrapped in faith.

(a) There is no better way to understand the context of Romans 4 than to emphatically restate how we ended Chapter 3. You simply can't develop sound doctrine from small, out-of-context bits of Scripture. It is helpful to remember what Paul said elsewhere on the topic.

1. The law is practiced by the practice of faith!

*"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

- a) This will help to keep our theology consistent and protect us from becoming Christians who use isolated soundbites to develop doctrinal beliefs.
  - b) Obedience by faith is Paul's message throughout his writings and is the delicate balance he displays throughout the Romans rollercoaster of law and grace.
  - c) So, he emphatically states that the law is NOT made void by faith, but then again reintroduces the idea that works without faith are of no value.
  - d) Abraham did put Isaac on the altar, a work for sure (see James), but he did it in faith that Yahweh would still make him the father of many nations
- (3) It was that action mixed with faith that made him righteous.
- (a) Paul gives more details on this concept in Galatians 3
    - 1. Why are works of law a curse? And why is "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*" not works of law?
      - a) Because: "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, **to do them.***" (Referring to Deut. 27:26)
      - 1) Curses are for those who don't do the law.



- 2) Works of law is defined as “not doing the law!”
  - 3) Therefore, if you are of works of the law and not a doer of the law, curses await.
- b) And because: *“The man who does them shall live by them.”*
- 1) Don’t get involved in any of those pagan activities of Egypt or Canaan.
  - 2) Do obey Yahweh’s laws and walk in them!
  - 3) If you do, you will have life (and not death)!
- (Referring to Leviticus 18:5)
- c) Moses knew what it meant and so does Paul...
- “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6).*
- 1) See [Vernacular Sermon Notes](#) (Pages 43-50) for a detailed explanation

### **C. Let’s revisit what James says on the topic...**

- (1) It brings the perfect understanding to what it means to establish the law by faith (Romans 3:31), to make it stand firm.
- (a) Notice how James distinguishes “earned righteousness” that comes from works, from “imputed righteousness” that comes from faith, using the very same scripture about Abraham.

- (b) The “works of law” that Paul is against is the legalism.
- (c) We’ve already defined and discussed this at length. (See [Vernacular](#))
- (d) But Paul, no doubt, tells us elsewhere that we are saved for “good works” (faith-based obedience).
- (e) James speaks of good works, like clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, both inspired by faith. Yahshua said, “Love your neighbor.” There’s no love in a faith that watches someone go hungry.
- (f) Yet, those good deeds are merely filthy rags without faith (Isaiah 64:6).
- (g) We must understand that the only way a sinner can approach Yahweh is through repentance and faith. Like King David to whom Paul will refer in Romans 4:5-8, so poignantly declared in Psalm 32, and as Paul so eloquently states in Ephesians 2.
- (h) However, once we are saved by His grace, it is mandated that we walk in the good works that He has prepared for us.
  - 1) The heart (mind) change takes place first and then the physical action.

- 2) If we think we can go directly to “obeying the law” without first having faith, then we have a bleak and dark future ahead of us
  - (i) What good works are those? Obeying Yahweh's commands! Otherwise your declaration of faith is just a mental ascent and has no real substance.
  - (j) Yahshua said it like this, *“You will be known as a disciple by your fruit.” (Matthew 7:16-20)* The question then remains: is your fruit sweet and juicy or spoiled and rotten?
  - (k) Test it! “Now **godliness with contentment** is great gain.”
- (2) Imputed vs Practiced
  - (a) Imputed Righteousness vs. Practiced Righteousness
  - (b) Imputed Faith vs. Practiced Faith
  - (c) Imputed Godliness vs. Practiced Godliness

#### **D. Highlights in the Life of Abraham**

- (1) See Genesis 12-22
  - (a) Go! (Genesis 12:1-4)
  - (b) Blessed by Melchizedek. (Genesis 14:18-20)
  - (c) The Covenant. (Genesis 15:1-6)
  - (d) Affirmation (Genesis 15:7-21)
  - (e) The Covenant and Name Change. (Genesis 17:1-8)

- (f) Circumcision—a sign of the covenant! (Genesis 17:9-22)
  - (g) Abraham circumcised at 99 years old. (Genesis 17:23-27)
  - (h) The Son of Promise. (Genesis 18:1-15)
  - (i) Isaac is Born. (Genesis 21:1-6)
  - (j) Abraham's Faith in Action (the Sacrifice of Isaac). (Genesis 22:1-19)
- (2) A Genealogical Look at Abraham
- (a) The father of many nations!
    1. Abram (exalted father, covenant Genesis 15)
    2. Renamed Abraham (Genesis 17:4-5. Circumcision as a sign, vv. 10-11. Promise of Isaac, v. 16)
    3. Isaac, son of Abraham (seed of promise fulfilled Genesis 21, then faith tested Genesis 22)
    4. Jacob, son of Isaac (Genesis 25:26, Jacob I loved; Esau I hated, Rom. 9:13)
    5. Jacob, renamed Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:10, one who overcomes with the Almighty)
    6. Israel (had 12 sons, become tribes of Israel, Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-18, 22-26)
    7. Joseph (11th son/tribe, Genesis 35:24, who saved the lives of all brothers/tribes in Egypt, Genesis 37-50)

8. Levi (3rd son/tribe, Genesis 35:23, given priestly duties. Note: Judah was the 4th son)
  9. Moses (came from Levi, Exodus 2:1-10)
  10. Then Passover-Exodus-Freedom-Mount Sinai—The Law (Book of Exodus)
- (b) The sojourn of Israel (430 years) \*including the Exodus and years in Canaan.
- (3) The timeline of the 430 years includes all the years from the call of Abraham to the Exodus.
- (a) **A deep sleep fell upon Abram:** (Genesis 15:12-21)
1. **Amazing Prophetic Moment:** It is revealed that his descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own, and that they will serve their captors, and that they will be afflicted four hundred years.
    - a) This is prophetic of Israel being sent into foreign lands. It is important to note that they were strangers in a foreign land for 400 years and that is the totality of their affliction (not just their 80 years as slaves in Egypt under heavy burdens.)
    - b) **Timeline:** it is 64 years from the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses. So, during those 64 years the people are 'guests' in Egypt and not 'slaves' and are multiplying rapidly in numbers, and it is when

the new Pharaoh, who does not know Joseph, takes over (Exodus 1:8) that the captivity (hard labor) begins. This is right before the birth of Moses when Pharaoh orders the death of all newborn boys (that is why Moses was hidden). That would mean the hard labor (affliction) lasts for 80 years, the age Moses is when he is called back to Egypt to free the people. So, you can see that the affliction begins right before the birth of Moses and ends at the exodus when Moses is 80. There are 144 years between the death of Joseph and the Exodus.

- c) Click [here](#) to read more details about the math regarding the number of years of affliction.

## **Summary: IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS**

### **2. Righteousness Apart from Works**

#### **A. The Blessing of Imputed Righteousness**

- (1) With repentance Yahweh does not impute iniquity; with repentance Yahweh does impute righteousness.
  - (a) Belief is the work of faith.
    - 1. David enters the equation.

- a) Paul uses King David to seal his theological position.
  - b) If you are not working on your own to be justified, but instead concentrate your effort on the only One who does the justifying, even for pagans who start out in the worst condition, you will conclude that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ that true righteousness is achieved.
- (2) Imputed righteousness is free and puts you in right standing with Yahweh; earned righteousness has a cost and comes from what you do with that right standing.
  - (a) David celebrates, in song, the indescribable blessing it is to have our lawless actions forgiven and our sins paid for, instead of the cost being charged to our personal account.
- 1. Regardless of our individual capacities and disciplines, and no matter our level of knowledge and motivation to do the right things, perfect righteousness is that which is imparted to us by God.
  - a) He imputes His righteousness to us, while He graciously withholds imputing what we really deserve, the condemnation that comes as the

price-tag for our sins. And again, if the faith is authentic, there will be evidence.

- b) Paul draws from King David's experience as recorded in Psalm 32:1-2. This Psalm is likely inspired by David's history with Bathsheba. He's contemplating his sin, iniquity, transgression, all words that speak of violations against God's laws.
- c) For David, the offenses were serious: lust, abuse of power, adultery, causing another to sin, and premeditated murder.
- d) And yet, the penalty for sin is not imputed when there is genuine repentance.
- e) Paul, as is his custom, brings us clarity from the words he draws from the Old Testament. The Psalm tells us that with repentance Yahweh does not impute iniquity; Paul tells us that with repentance Yahweh does impute righteousness.
- f) Throughout the Scriptures we can recognize two types of righteousness, imputed and earned. Imputed righteousness is free and puts you in right standing with Yahweh; earned righteousness has a cost and comes from what you do with that right standing. Do you obey or not?



- g) To paraphrase what Yahweh also says in the same Psalm, *"I will instruct you in My ways; follow them, don't be like a stubborn mule!"* (vv. 8, 9)  
This means you just can't repent and then go back to doing your own thing. Your faith must be mixed with obedience.

## **Summary: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH**

### **3. The Father of All Who Believe**

#### **A. While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?**

- (1) Faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.
  - (a) How then was it accounted?
    1. His righteousness is accounted for by belief?
      - a) Although Paul has already made it perfectly clear on many occasions, again he emphasizes that the blessings just described are available to everyone, not just Jews.
      - b) Heritage and traditions, and even the commands that come with them, do not confer any special path to God's righteousness.
      - c) Certainly circumcision is oftentimes used to distinguish Jews from Gentiles, however, if we

bring Abraham back into focus, again we see that faith came first.

- d) Circumcision came afterwards, as a sign of the faith he displayed—faith in action.
- e) Abraham was not even circumcised yet when he was deemed righteous.
- f) The father of faith for all who believe was called by God before circumcision was given for a very good reason.
  - 1) It was so all future generations would know that God's righteousness is available by impartation only, and only to those who walk by faith and who respond with belief.
  - 2) The seal of that faith is displayed with an act of obedience, in this example with circumcision. But obedience is always the response, the sign that faith is real!

(2) The seal of faith...

- (a) A sign of the covenant!
- (b) How, remember...true circumcision is that of the heart!
  - 1. Abraham had faith and then was made righteous by belief, which led to (faith-based obedience), which resulted in circumcision.

- a) He was not circumcised first, and so it is with everyone. The heart (mind) change takes place first and then the physical action.
  - b) Obeying the Law first does not establish the heir. Faith does! We are the seeds of Abraham through faith.
  - c) And if we think we can go directly to “obeying the law” without first having faith, then we have a bleak and dark future ahead. Doing so would be telling Yahweh that we don’t need His promises; we can do it on our own. That would be bad because the Law without faith brings destruction.
  - d) The grace of Yahweh is what empowers us to obey Him; the Law was given to show us that we would always fall short without it.
- 1) See [Circumcision Reimagined](#)

## QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

### 1. Belief is an act of faith.

- A. In an essay, use the following passages to prove why the above statement is a true. (Romans 4:1-4; Genesis 15:1-6; Hebrews 11:6-19; James 2:14-24)

- 2. Describe the action connected to faith in each passage:**
- A. Ephesians 2:8-10
  - B. Romans 5:1-2
  - C. II Peter 1:1-10
  - D. Romans 10:9-10
- 3. Each of the following are both imputed and practiced. Write a short statement distinguishing the two and the mistake often made in each.**
- A. Imputed vs Practiced Righteousness (See: II Corinthians 5:21; I John 3:7; Romans 10:3-4)
  - B. Imputed vs Practiced Faith (See: II Peter 1:1; II Peter 1:5; Hebrews 11:6)
  - C. Imputed vs Practiced Godliness (See: I John 3:1-2; I Timothy 4:7-8; II Timothy 3:5)
- 4. Describe how Paul uses David to prove how God imputes righteousness apart from works.** (See Romans 4:5-8)
- 5. Once again, Paul emphasizes that the righteousness of faith is available to everyone regardless of bloodline or past traditions.**
- A. How does he do that using Abraham in Romans 4:9-12 and how does it support what he said earlier in Romans 4:1-4? (Also see Genesis 17:9-22)
  - B. How is this consistent with what he taught us earlier in the the letter in Romans 2:25-29?