

Epistle of Romans XI

Chapter 4:1-8

Fred R. Coulter—February 1, 1997

Romans 3:31: "Are we, then, abolishing law through faith? MAY IT NEVER BE!...."

Don't even let this thought come into existence! The *King James* translates it 'God forbid' but that is completely incorrect.

"...On the contrary, we are establishing law" (v 31).

Then what he does in Rom. 4 is use Abraham as an example. It is also a very important thing for us to understand. In establishing law, what is God doing with the Holy Spirit? He is giving us *the heart, the desire and the ability* to keep the Law the way He wants it kept. That's why you're establishing law.

We have here the beginning of the operation of grace. *Grace*, as we know, is one of the most misunderstood topics. Let's get a comparison. Rom. 4 is dealing with the individual. There are lessons for each one of us on an individual basis. That's why it begins with Abraham. You will find that Rom. 4-8 all deals with the individual. When you come to Rom. 9-11 you're dealing with the other half of Abraham's promises—that he received from God—having to do with the nation Israel and the calling of Israel and what God did there. We're also going to cover quite a few things concerning Abraham—Old Testament and New Testament. I want to cover Rom. 4 as it pertains to the things that are there as it pertains to Abraham.

In Gen. 12 God is dealing with Abraham on an individual basis—one-to-one. That's why it's so very important that our relationship with God be that same way. That we are to learn, we are accountable and responsible to God on a one-to-one basis.

Genesis 12:1: "And the LORD said to Abram, 'Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house into a land that I will show you.'"

When this statement was made, this was right after the great apostasy led by Nimrod and the Tower of Babel and the world going for all the pagan religions of the goddess-worship and everything that you would read of in *The Two Babylons* that overspread the whole earth. Right in the middle of this, God called Abraham, and he said:

Verse 2: "And I will make *of you* a great nation...."

This has tremendous significance *spiritually* and *physically because* there were promises that were spiritual promises given to Abraham and there were physical promises for the nation of Israel that were given to Abraham. You have the two of them combined here in 'a great nation.' What will be the greatest nation on earth when Christ returns? *Spiritual Israel, the Church, the bride of Christ!* So, keep that in mind.

"...And I will bless you and make your name great...." (v 2).

Everything that was done—from the Old Testament—from this time forward always relates back to the name of Abraham. When we come to the New Testament, that also relates back to Abraham. His name is great!

"...And you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. And in you shall **all families of the earth be blessed**" (vs 2-3).

Now, you might put there:

- *spiritually* through Christ
- *physically* through Israel

All the nations will be blessed!

Verse 4: "Then Abram departed, even as the LORD had spoken to him...." (v 4).

Which translated in another term means ***Abraham obeyed the voice of God!*** We've covered that, and we've keyed in on that several times, but I want to read it into the record here. We always begin with what we know; the simple and easy to understand and then we begin to build toward the more difficult—build 'precept upon precept, line upon line' and put the whole spiritual story together.

Genesis 26:4—God is talking to Isaac: "And I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and will give to your seed all these lands...."

Spiritually and physically! We are all as Isaac (Gal. 4). Is God going to give all these countries to Christ and the Church when Christ returns? *Yes!* We can also not only think of this as *spiritual* and *physical*, but we can also think of *past* and *future*—when Christ returns. Do they have to come through Israel for those blessings? *Yes!*

"...And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (v 4).

That ties in *physically and spiritually*.

Here is the reason, not because of what Isaac did; Isaac was the *seed of promise*.

Verse 5: "**Because Abraham obeyed My voice...**"

{Note sermon *Obey the Voice of God!*} That is the key, profound, important thing! When God deals with someone on a one-to-one basis, the most important thing is ***believing God*** and ***obeying His voice!***

"...and **kept My charge...**

[whatever God would say emphatically to do]

...**My commandments, My statutes, and My laws"** (v 5).

Whose laws are they? *God's!* Since the covenant to Israel was based on the promise given to Abraham, and God gave laws to Israel, what did God say concerning His laws that He gave to Israel?

- Whose were they? *They were God's laws!*
- Do you suppose that God gave one set of laws to Abraham and his household and a different set of laws to Israel? *Of course not! No!*

Since everyone likes to think there was no law until it was given at Sinai, they're dealing with a period of 2,500 years. Do you suppose that God would allow the world to go without His laws and commandments for a little over half of the whole history of the world? *No!*

Let's go to Exodus and we will clear up another little problem. Let's see the first thing that God told Moses when He called him. This is the story of the 'burning bush.'

Exodus 3:4: "And the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see. God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, 'Moses! Moses!' And he said, 'Here I *am*.' And He said, 'Do not come near here. Put off your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand *is Holy ground*'" (vs 4-5).

The ground was Holy because God's presence was there. Same way with us; we're a Holy people because we have the Spirit of God in us.

Verse 6: "And He said, 'I *am* the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'....

[even in beginning to deal with Israel, it goes back to Abraham]

...And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (vs 4-6).

Verse 13: "And Moses said to God, 'Behold, *when* I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they shall say to me, "What *is* His name?" What shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM.'"

That is very important, especially when you get into the Gospel of John and into the book of Revelation. {note sermon *I AM That I AM*}. This literally means *I will be what I shall be*. In other words, whenever God begins dealing with someone, He has a name that goes with the covenant. We're going to see this in just a minute.

"...And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."' And God said to Moses again, 'You shall say this to the children of Israel, "The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My title from generation to generation"' (vs 14-15).

However, when He was dealing with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you find something a little different.

Exodus 6:1 "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he shall let them go, and with a strong hand he shall drive them out of his land.' And God spoke to Moses, and said to him, 'I am the LORD. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob *as* God Almighty...

[El Shaddai]

...But I was not known to them *by* My name JEHOVAH

[YHVH]" (vs 1-3).

That's important for us to understand. That also helps substantiate that not only did Moses bring together certain documents, to bring the book of Genesis together, but that he also wrote in there the YHVH because God was not known by that name until He began dealing with the children of Israel. At least to say, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know Him by the name Jehovah, but El Shaddai or God Almighty. So that's another thing for 'sacred namers' to remember. If you want to get back really to the faith once delivered, why not just go to El Shaddai.

Again, God reiterates, after the children of Israel sinned (Ex. 32), and He told them He would eliminate all the children of Israel and He would do it through Moses. This is what He said to Moses when He said that He would fulfill His promise through him.

Exodus 33:1: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, "To your seed I will give it.'""

Moses intervened and God said, 'Okay'—He would do it. However, in Exo. 32, He said, before Moses intervened, 'Stand aside and I'll fulfill My promise through you.' Again, He reiterates Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Deuteronomy 1:8—just before they're ready to go into the *promised land*, He does exactly the same thing again:

"Behold, I have set before you the land. Go in and possess the land which the LORD has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them."

Whenever God does anything major, it is 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'—always! Going back to the fathers. That would be an interesting study for you to do: look up all the places where it says *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* in the Old Testament and the New Testament. I think you will be quite shocked at how many times it's mentioned.

Let's come to the New Testament now, the book of Luke, chapter one. I don't think that we have noticed this before quite in this way, in relationship to the prayer of Mary. Notice that Mary had to also have understanding of the Scriptures. She also had to have understanding of the prophecies. She also had to understand what God was doing.

Luke 1:46: "Then Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exalted in God my Savior; for He has looked upon the humble estate of His handmaid; for behold, from this time forward all generations shall count me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things to me, and Holy *is* His name; and His mercy *is* toward those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has worked strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* haughty in *the* imagination of their hearts. He has put down rulers from thrones, and has exalted *the* lowly. He has filled *the* hungry with good things, and *the* rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembering *His* mercy, exactly as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.'" (vs 46-55).

So, even Mary knew!

What I want to do with this is show that it began with Abraham; everything else continued with Abraham through Isaac, through Jacob, through Israel and they all refer back to Abraham and to 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Mary did exactly the same thing here. It's very important for us to understand this, when we realize how God deals with each of us on an individual basis. There's a reason for it.

Romans 4:1: "What then...
[this then is answering the question concerning how you establish law]
...shall we say *that* **our father Abraham**..."

Notice that he didn't go to Jacob. He didn't go to Benjamin, because Benjamin was the tribe from which Paul was a descendant of. So, even New Testament grace, and all New Testament theology is based upon Abraham.

"...has found with respect to *the* flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works...
[we've covered in great detail *works of law*]
...he has a basis for boasting, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say?
'And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.'" (vs 1-4).
That makes it much easier to understand.

If you agree to work for someone for 'thus and such' amount of money, and you have a contract which you signed, or you have a verbal agreement to which you have agreed, are not those things due you upon completion of work? Is it not then an obligation? ***You cannot obligate God by what you do!*** So, this is not an employer/employee contractual labor contract agreement. This is beginning to bring us into the understanding of grace.

Verse 4: "Now, to the one who works, the reward is not reckoned according to grace; rather, *it is reckoned* as a debt."

Now we are talking about something entirely different. Now we are talking about how God makes an individual right—put in right standing with Him—because God will only deal with those people that He puts in right standing with Himself *on an individual basis*; that's what we're talking about here.

Verse 5: "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him..."

Not only do you have to believe what God says, you have to believe on Him—the Father and Christ

"...**Who justifies the ungodly**, his faith...
[because of believing]
...is reckoned for righteousness" (v 5).

There's quite a bit in here. 'Righteousness' means *right standing with God the Father in heaven above* because of being justified. Let's cover "...Who is justifies the ungodly..."

- Does that mean that God—even looking at the wicked in the world—automatically justifies the ungodly? *NO! Something has to be done!*
- Is it a work? *It can't be a work because you're not going to obligate God!*
- What is it that a sinner has to do? *Repent!*

That is an action, but it is an action from *the heart! From within!* That cannot be purchased. That has to be something that you choose; something from your innermost being that you do.

Here's a little lesson for us in this. It has to be something that you choose to do, *to do the will of the Father*. Here's a comparison. This is based upon *belief* and *action*: Christ was asking the Pharisees that were gathered around Him:

Matthew 21:28: "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first one and said, 'Son, go work in my vineyard today.' And he answered *and* said, 'I will not'; but afterwards he repented *and* went. Then he came to the second *son and* said the same thing. And he answered *and* said, 'Sir, I will *go*'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of the father?' They said to Him, 'The first *one*.' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you truly, the tax collectors and *the* harlots are going into the Kingdom of God before you **before you**' (vs 28-31)

—because the tax collectors and harlots repented.

Verse 32: "For John came to you in *the* way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and *the* harlots believed him. Yet, you, after seeing *this*, did not afterwards repent and believe him."

There is a clear example that God is not going to justify anyone *unless there is **repentance and action** based upon that repentance, and **it must be from the heart!***

It's very interesting, when you talk about the scribes and the Pharisees, not only were they unclean in what they did, but Jesus said they were 'unclean within'; like sepulchers. That's why the New Covenant has to do with *the heart*. God wants

- a change of heart
- a change of mind
- a belief in Christ

Here's how there is repentance. David's repentance after the affair with Bathsheba. This is really a tremendous example of the right kind of repentance.

Psalm 51:1: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity...

[internally, mentally, spiritually]

...and **cleans** me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (vs 1-3).

When you sin like David did, that sin just kind of beats in the forefront of your mind constantly, especially when God leads you to repentance and you come to see how evil the evil really is. Then you realize that it's ever before you.

Verse 4: "Against You, You only, have I sinned..."

Let's understand something here. You can sin against an individual because you violate them one way or the other. But that sin is still against God. Did not David do that with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband, causing Joab to put him in the forefront of the battle and the whole deceptive thing to try and cover it? *Yes!* You can even sin against your own body, as Paul says if you commit adultery, fornication (1-Cor. 6). And sinning against your own body means that you can reap all of those things that comes from fornication, every bit of it: mental turmoil, possibility of disease, everything that goes along with it. You sin against your own body, but **ALL sin is against God!** Repentance has to begin by going to God and then you go to your brother.

"...and done evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak and be in the right when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity..." (vs 4-5).

Talking about having the *law of sin and death* within him. His mother did not commit adultery and then conceive David, but this is just talking about the whole sinful nature of human nature.

"...and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire Truth in the inward parts...

[that's what God wants cleaned up]

...and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (vs 5-7).

You can tie this in with Isa. 1, when God calls upon Israel to repent.

Verse 8: "Make me to hear joy and gladness..."

[because after repentance it brings forth the joyful fruits of righteousness afterwards]

...that the bones, which You have broken, may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (vs 8-10).

That's the kind of repentance that God wants. When it talks about God justifying the ungodly, that's what it means. When the ungodly, as David was in his behavior with this and what he did, when he repented then God forgave him.

Romans 4:5: "...Who justifies the ungodly...
[upon repentance]

...his faith is reckoned for righteousness."

Put in right standing with God. You believe in God the Father and Jesus Christ and accept that sacrifice and let God apply that to you. That is counted as *righteousness*. It doesn't mean that you do not keep the commandments of God, of course you do! But this *righteousness* is a great *right standing with God!*

Verse 6: "Even as David also declares the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness separate from works."

What is the difference between *repentance* and *a work*? *Repentance* comes from the heart and that's toward God on an individual one-to-one relationship. *A work* would be like for the Catholics, do so many 'hail Marys' and 'our fathers.' Or like the Jews, when one sins he should go out and do good works to compensate for it. That is the difference. You could do the work without repentance and then go to God and say, 'I have done this, therefore, You must accept me.' **NO!** God is saying, 'I want the inside clean, I want the heart clean, I want the repentance from the inside.' So, that's separate from works.

Verse 7: "Blessed are *those* whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is the* man to whom *the* Lord will not impute *any* sin" (vs 7-8).

Let's see how this operates. This is where this quote is taken from;

Psalms 32:1: "Blessed is the man 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 guile" (vs 1-2).

You can see what this repentance does. where "...there is no guile" means *taken away all the inner hypocrisy!* There is no secret agenda. There is no saying one thing with your mouth and then denying it with your heart, *that's guile!*

Verse 3: "When I kept silent, my bones wore away through my groaning all the day long, for by day and by night Your hand was heavy upon me...
[correction to lead him to repentance]

...my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah" (vs 3-4)
—think on this!

So, God's hand was heavy to bring him to repentance. It is God, as we saw (Rom 2:4) that it is 'graciousness of God which leads you to repentance'—true, deep heartfelt repentance, **God leads you to.**

Verse 5: "I acknowledged my sin to You...
[you're not to confess your sins to a priest; *to God!*]
...and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the LORD,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah....
[stop, think and meditate on this]
...For this *reason* let every godly one pray to You in a time when You may be found..."
(vs 5-6).

That says an awful lot, too. That there's a time to repent and there's a time to change—when God may be found! There are going to be an awful lot of people, I'm afraid, that are going to find there's going to come a time when God will not hear, when He cannot be found. Just like He told Jeremiah, 'Don't pray for this people. Don't raise up a voice, I won't listen to you.'

"...surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place...
[righteousness/right standing with God]
...You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall encircle me with songs of deliverance. Selah. *You said*, 'I will instruct you...
[this is coming from God—He's going to instruct us]
...and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you, My eye shall be upon you. Be not like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding—which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you'" (vs 6-9).

In other words, don't be like a horse or a mule. What's that old saying: How do you get a mule to understand? *You hit them right between the eyes with a two-by-four!* Unfortunately, there are a lot of people today that not even the two-by-four is doing any good. They say, 'You're speaking evil of me.' **No!** It's a call to repentance. The next thing to happen is that God will build a fire under them.

Notice what happens if you act like a horse or a mule,
v 10: "The wicked has many sorrows...
[because they don't repent, and they refuse to heed.]
...but His steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the LORD."

Think how many times the mercy of God, through His angels, has protected us, and God just kept us from a lot of stupidity and evil and wretchedness; just taking us out of the way. We don't know! I think at the resurrection we'll find out many, many times!

Verse 11: "Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright **in heart**"
—because you've had the heart-cleaning.

In this kind of repentance and the kind of justification that God wants to give, God wants you to repent when you know that you have sinned. If you wait until you're right, which is a contradictory statement. If you sin and then say 'I can't pray because I've sinned.' or 'I'll go to God when I make myself right.' We've all done that—haven't we? But it needs to dawn on us: How can we, as individuals, make ourselves right and then go to God and say, 'God, I've made myself right, now You forgive me for this sin.' What are you trying to do? *You're trying to earn forgiveness!* That is *a work!* That's why you have to repent.

As soon as you know you have sinned, repent in that instant! That's what you need to do. I'll tell you what, if you think you're going to wait until your right, I'll guarantee you one thing: You're going to be miserable. You are going to be depressed. You are going to feel cutoff because you are. You can't make yourself right. Can you, with what you do, do the work of the sacrifice of Christ? *No!* So therefore, you can't make yourself right, because the only thing that makes you right is repentance.

Psalms 86:1: "Bow down Your ear, O LORD, answer me, for I am poor and needy....
[all of us all the time]
...Preserve my soul, for I am Holy...
[chosen of God and have God's Spirit]
...O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I cry unto You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul, for You, **LORD, are good**...
[gracious]
...**and ready to forgive**..." (vs 1-5).

God has given a promise that if you repent He will forgive. {note booklet: *Grace of God*}
"...**and rich in mercy** to all those who call upon You. Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me" (vs 5-7).
Don't wait until the trouble overwhelms you.

(go to the next track)

Call on God first! Look to Him!

Psalm 85:1: "O LORD, You have shown favor to Your land; You have brought back Jacob from exile."

This is also a prophecy of the bringing of Israel together again.

Verse 2: "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; **You have covered all their sins.** Selah....

[only God can do that]

...You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger....

[Joel 2 & 3]

...Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?....

[sometimes if you neglect God you'll feel like that]

...Will You not give us life again, so that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation. I will hear what God the LORD will speak; for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints, but let them not **turn again to folly**" (vs 2-8).

Oh my, that's sure a good warning today. Don't let the people of God "**...turn again to folly.**"

Verse 9: "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and Truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before Him and shall set us in the way of His steps" (vs 9-13)

—so that we follow and walk in His steps.

Let's show that in the New Testament. I think it's very important for us to realize that the New Testament consistently carries forward all of those things that we find in the Old Testament. Many of those things concerning repentance and salvation in the Old Testament are prophecies for what is happening today. This ties in with the kind of relationship—the one-to-one relationship—that God wants us to have is tied in with Abraham, and the lesson that we are going to learn in Rom. 4.

1-John 1:6 "If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth. However, if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another..." (vs 6-7)

—individual relationships, the fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ first and then one with another second

"...and **the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin**....
[every sin]

...If we say that we do not have sin...
[therefore, we don't need to repent]

...we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (vs 7-8).
Tie that in with what we just covered in Psa. 51—He wants Truth in the inward parts; what we covered there in Psa. 85-86 about Truth inside.

Verse 9: "If we confess our own sins...
[repentance to God through Christ]

...He is faithful...
[unwavering]

...and righteous
[just],

to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"

That's what it means that God 'justifies the ungodly' upon repentance—that's what it's talking about. The Jews, for Judaism, mock this and say, 'Well, we don't read in the Old Testament that God justifies the ungodly.' They don't go through the whole operation of how it's done. You will see that Judaism says you have to be your own redeemer.

Verse 10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar..."
You talk about the height of sin; making God a liar! People can make God a liar in many ways, by saying:

- God didn't mean this when He said thus and such
- God didn't mean that we were to keep the Sabbath
- God didn't mean we were to keep the Holy Days

What you're doing, you're saying God is a liar. We're going to have to really get these things straight and lay it out for everyone to understand.

"...and His Word is not in us" (v 10).
How can you have *the Word of God in you* if you make God a liar? If God is true and Holy and righteous, and perfect, and you make Him a liar, is God going to stand still for that? Is any man going to continue in that without some kind of punishment and recompense upon them? *NO! Without a doubt it's going to come!* Hopefully, they will repent and understand their sins and recover themselves from that.

Let's show that this is something that we need to consider every single day and every single time that we pray. Has to do with our prayers.

Matthew 6:9: "Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: "Our Father, Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven"" (vs 9-10)

When you are praying 'Your will be done on earth'—what does that mean? *Right here on the earth!* But when you are particularly praying that; that is that *God's will be done in your life*, that on an individual basis is what it means. God's will is going to be done on the earth, without a doubt! There's no way it's not going to be done, so that means *in your own life*.

Verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors" (vs 11-12).

We need forgiveness everyday. Why? *We still have the law of sin and death in us!* I doubt if there is one day we could ever say, 'I have lived a perfect day today.' I will not be raising my hand on that one!

Verse 13: "And lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one...."

Notice how that follows right on the heels of forgiving our debts and our sins.

"...For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'....

[notice that it doesn't stop right there]:

...For, if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (vs 11-14).

Notice how much this forgiveness and repentance is to involve, not just for the self. It's one thing to say, 'Father, forgive me, but not him.' If God grants forgiveness to you, don't you want God to grant that to someone else? Should you not be willing to forgive someone else? *Yes!* It's also based upon our choices and our decision.

This thing of justifying the ungodly has quite a bit more to do than just the flat statement of it. This has to do with your interaction of other people, more than just people in general. You don't have to ask God to forgive the grocer down the street that you just walk in and buy something from, because he hasn't done anything to you. If he rips you off and overcharges you \$20 and you go down and try and get that taken care of, and he does do it, then you forgive him and so forth.

Quite a discussion here on what it means to forgive men their trespasses and if you don't then God won't forgive you. Does that mean that you forgive someone as Bill Cosby already forgave the man who killed his son, though they don't know who it is. That's fine; I hope that he really has. That doesn't mean that the killer won't be brought to justice, nor will justice

not be executed upon him. Also, it has to do with Matt. 18—if your brother sins against you and repents then you will forgive him 'seven times seventy." ***There has to be repentance involved in it!***

What if there is someone who does not repent and has done some terrible, evil, personal things to you—how do you handle that? You ask God to give you a forgiving heart so that *when* or *if* they repent, you will be able to forgive that individual. The reason is, ***God does not want you to go around carrying these burdens of unforgiveness in your heart, because that's where bitterness comes from.*** That's why all of these things are very important. That's why this thing of coming to God, where He justifies you, grants you His Spirit, leads you to repentance, all come together in this. It's not just that single statement—*all of it!* That's why you have to put together *all* of the Word of God so that you have a full understanding.

Classic example: Many people have never forgiven Herbert Armstrong for what he did. They have remained bitter, hostile, angry—you can put any name in there you want, but I use that one because many are familiar with it. I talked to one man on the phone and as soon as I mentioned his name, BAM! it was nothing but bitterness, hatred and a diatribe—I couldn't believe it! Did his lack of forgiveness to Herbert Armstrong cause him great problems with God and other people? ***Yes!*** Now then, the reason you are to forgive someone like that, or anybody, is because God may lead the individual to repentance. I'm sure that God led Herbert Armstrong to repentance. This is what set that man afire when I said it, because he couldn't conceive that God would lead him to repentance.

Just go back and read 1-Chron. 35 about Manasseh. God can lead anyone He desires to repentance, if they have a willing heart. I think that Herbert Armstrong did, and I think that he repented. Now what are all these bitter people—who are hostile and angry against him—going to do? That's why Paul has given this. Then on a personal, individual basis—problems with a marriage, with husband/wife, with divorce—that are lying deep in the bosom. There has to be an attitude of forgiveness toward that individual so that if and when they repent then you can go ahead and say 'I forgive you, too.' If you don't forgive then it's going to cut you off from God and your Father is not going to forgive you your trespasses. God makes it very important for you. He gives you incentive—doesn't He?

What if you go to God and say, 'I know I have to forgive this individual' but I really don't want to. Then what do you do. That's a place to start. You need to do that; you need to get rid of that feeling because how can you love and help that person at a later date? ***You cannot do it!*** Very profound! Very important! All of this comes to bear in Rom. 4 and having to do with Abraham, and having to do with the whole principle of how God deals with people. What

have we been talking about? *The heart and the mind!* We've been talking about the inner work of ***belief and faith*** vs ***the outer work of works***; and the outer work of circumcision.

Romans 4:8: "Blessed is *the* man to whom *the* Lord will not impute *any* sin."
Once they have been forgiven (Psa. 103). He forgives all of our sins and all of our iniquities and removes them from us as far as the East is from the West.' And when there is, there is no imputing of sin. How can there be if it's forgiven? If it's totally covered by Christ? *That is the blessedness of grace!*

Verse 9: "Now then, *does* this blessedness *come* upon the circumcision *only*...
[the so-called 'chosen people']
...or also upon the uncircumcision? For we are saying that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness....
[that's what the Scripture says]
...In what condition, therefore was it imputed?...." (vs 9-10).

Paul has a great big 'gotcha!' for all of the technicalities and all the legalists of the Jews, because now they can go back and read in Gen. 15 when this was given, and read when he was circumcised.

"...When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision" (v 10).
Very important! Belief was from the heart!

Verse 11: "And *afterwards* he received *the* sign of circumcision, *as* a seal of the righteousness of the faith that *he had* in the *condition of* uncircumcision..."
—which is true, but we are going to see that there were two distinct covenants. Actually, three altogether: Gen. 15; 17, 22. All three of those were separate covenants with different circumstances.

"...that he might become *the* father of all those who believe..." (v 11).
That goes right back to Gen. 12:1-2: 'I will make you a father of many nations'—for those who are believing.

"...though they have not been circumcised, in order that the righteousness of *faith* might also be imputed to them" (v 11).

So, not only do we have the Law, but we also have case history. What Paul is doing in a legal sense is *using a legal term that is called 'precedent.'* Precedent is the ground of law. Precedent is what God has done, which took place *before* the circumcision occurred, so

therefore, that was purposefully done by God so that He could call all of those who were not circumcised and bring them to the faith of Christ. That's what he's saying.

Verse 12: "And *that he* might become *the* father of *the* circumcision—not to those who are of the circumcision only, but also to those who walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had during *his* uncircumcision. For the promise to Abraham, or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, *was not given* through law; rather, *it was* through *the* righteousness of faith; because if those of *the* law *be the* heirs, *then* faith is made void, and the promise *is* made of no effect" (vs 12-14).

That's why he started with the promise.

We will look at the detail of when this occurred. Then we will compare that with James 2, because there is supposedly a conflict in the Bible, which there never is. The conflict is supposedly that James says that Abraham was 'justified by works'; Paul says Abraham was 'justified by faith.' Let's look at the faith one first.

Genesis 15:4: "And behold, the Word of the LORD *came* to him saying, 'This man shall not be your heir...'"

That's a very interesting thing we need to understand.

- Was the proclivity there for Abraham to do some kind of *work*? *Yes!*
- Was the proclivity there—and it's with everyone of us—to do something for God?

'We'll tell God how to do this...' or we will misapply a law that God already had to the wrong circumstances.

Verse 1: "After these things the Word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram, I *am* your shield and your exceedingly great reward.' And Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me since I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?'" (vs 1-2).

This was one of the laws: If you have no seed you can take your chief servant and you can appoint him as your heir.

Verse 3: "And Abram said, 'Behold, You have given no seed to me; and lo, one born in my house *is* my heir.'"

He didn't just exactly understand what was going to happen. He was called at age 75 and now we're probably dealing with about age 85 at this particular place, and the promise was given but never received. How is God going to make of him the 'father of many nations' and the whole 'world be blessed in him,' and his wife through all these years of marriage didn't

have single child. Lo and behold, many times they probably tried and tried and tried and after being about 85 years old you get a little weary in trying. You've pretty well concluded that nothing is going to happen.

Verse 4: "And behold, the Word of the LORD *came* to him saying, 'This man shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own loins shall be your heir.'"

What proof? *God did not take him down to the local health food store and buy him potency pills!* He did not give him a secret potion. What did He do? *There were no works involved!*

Verse 5: "And He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward the heavens...'" Why is this so important? What did Jesus say? *Heaven and earth may pass away, but My Word shall not!*

So, if He takes him out and shows him the heavens at night and He says,

"...and number the stars—if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your seed be.'" (v 5).

- What was the only thing that Abraham could do?
- Was there a work? *No!*
- Was there something that God said go do and it will happen? *No!*

But He showed him the heavens. If God is standing right next to you and showing you the heavens and showing you the stars that He has created and says, 'I'm going to give your seed from your own body and they're going to be just like all of these stars'—

- ***You believe!***
- ***You believe*** that God told you the truth!
- ***You believe*** that God was able to perform it!

That belief in the Word of God and the goodness of God—though yet unfulfilled—***was counted as righteousness!***

Verse 6: "And he believed in the LORD. And He accounted it to him for righteousness." So, there was *no work to do! No commandment to follow!*

Let's look at the other account, and we will see that, lo and behold, there is no contradiction at all.

James 2:18: "But someone is going to say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' *My answer is:* You prove your faith to me through your works, and I will prove my faith to you through my works. Do you believe that God is one? You do well...

[that's no big deal, everybody ought to know that]

...to believe *this*. Even the demons believe and tremble *in fear*. But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his own son, upon the altar?" (vs 18-21).

Are we talking about Gen. 15 or Gen. 22? *We're talking about two different occurrences!* This one of offering up Isaac was in Gen. 22, a different occurrence. Was there something he was to do? *Yes!* If he believed God, was he to do what God said? *Yes!*

Verse 22: "Do you not see that faith was working together with his works, and by works *his* faith was perfected? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Now, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness'; and he was called a friend of God" (vs 22-23).

He added a little bit to it; *yes, he did!* He added that ***he was a friend of God!***

Verse 24: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"—when *works* are required! You have to understand that.

What *work* could Abraham do after God said, 'Look into the heavens and I'm promising you that that's how your seed is going to be'? He'd already been doing the works and trying for how many years. This occurrence was that there was something he had to do.

Verse 25: "Now, in the same manner also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when, after receiving the messengers, she sent *them* out a different way? For as the body without *the* spirit is dead, in the same way also, faith without works is dead" (vs 25-26).

Let's see that God commanded him to do something, and let's recall what we started out with:

Genesis. 26:5: "Because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

Genesis 22:1: "And it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac...'" (vs 1-2).

Ishmael was not counted as his son, though he was. *Why? Because Ishmael came from Hagar!*

"...whom you love, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.' And Abraham rose up 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 rose up and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off" (vs 1-4).

He was doing everything that God said. If you believe God are there works you are to do? *Yes!* If God says, 'Remember the seventh-day, to keep it Holy'—the Sabbath Day—and do no work in it,' what are you to do? *You're to observe the seventh-day Sabbath as God said!*

Let's tie this all together; there are *works* we are to do! Let me call your attention to what Jesus said to all of the churches: ***'I know your works!'*** Did He have things to say about their works? *Yes!* Did He say He was going to judge them by their works? *Yes!* Some of their works were not the good works that God ordained for them to walk in.

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works... [that you do of your own initiative] ...so that no one may boast" (vs 8-9).

One of the works of Abraham that he thought of was: 'Let it be Eleazar, my chief servant.'

Verse 10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the good works*...

[that's how faith is made perfect; by good works]

... that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them."

That's the way of the Lord; to walk in them! That's what Abraham did. Here is the work that Abraham had to do: In obeying the voice of God, does this conflict with what he did in Gen. 15? *No!*

- he believed
- counted to him for righteousness
- Isaac was born

However old he is at this particular case, it says 'lad.' I would have to say he would probably have to be just before 20-years-old, after thinking that through again—when this occurred. Otherwise you wouldn't call him a 'lad.' When he's 21 he's a man.

Genesis 22:5: "And Abraham said to his young men, 'You stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son...." (vs 5-6).

That was quite a task. Think about that! Of course, Isaac knew what was going to happen—carrying the wood for his own death.

"...And he took the fire *pot* in his hand, and a knife. And they both went together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here I *am*, my son.' And he said, 'Behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'....

[He knew!]

...And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' So, they both went on together" (vs 6-8).

That's faith, too— isn't it? That had to be imputed to him for righteousness. Believing, even in spite of doing the things that He had said to do. Yes, ***God will provide!*** Great lesson for us! Even at the last minute, *God will provide!* And with every temptation He will provide a way of escape! There it is!

Verse 9: "And they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the wood, upon the altar. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son" (vs 9-10).

Did everything that God said right down to the last detail!

Verse 11: "And the angel of the LORD called to him from the heavens and said, 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I *am*.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him, **for now I know that you fear God...**" (vs 11-12).

Look at all the trying and testing that he went through, and God finally said, '***Now I know!***' I think that's what God wants to know from us today. Does God now know that we love God and fear Him, and will do the things that He wants us to do? Are we going to have the same faith as Abraham? And that's the whole story, which Paul is writing about in Rom. 4, and that James is writing about if we have the faith that we say we have—**are we going to do the things that God wants us to do?**

"...**now I know...**" (v 12).

I think that's what is coming upon the Church today; God wants to know, and *know without a doubt!*

"...seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (v 12).

I don't care what the Arabs say, this was NOT Ishmael! There's no way it can be.

Verse 13: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram was entangled in a thicket by its horns...."

I believe God instantaneously created a perfect animal sacrifice as a substitute.

"...And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide; so that it is said *until* this day, 'In the mount of the LORD it will be provided'" (vs 13-14).

Then we come to the final, concluding promise to Abraham. God swearing by Himself! This is why everything—Old Testament and New Testament—on into the Kingdom of God all hinges upon Abraham all of the way through.

Verse 15: "And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, 'By Myself have I sworn,' says the LORD..." (vs 15-16).

Everything that God does because of Abraham was because God has sworn by Himself. It doesn't depend on the goodness of the offspring—

- though He hopes they would be good
- though He hopes they would obey Him and be righteous
- though He hopes they would keep Him as their God

"...'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens...'" (vs 16-17).

Started right out where we began in Gen. 15. What are the saved going to look like in their glory? *The stars of heaven!* This is referring to the spiritual seed.

"...and as the sand which is upon the seashore....

[the physical seed, the physical children of Israel]

...And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **because you have obeyed My voice.**" (vs 17-18).

So, we conclude where we began. Is that not important? ***That's why everything for the New Testament is based upon the faith and belief of Abraham on an individual, one-to-one relationship, so that you can be in right standing with God.***

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- Romans 3:31
- Genesis 12:1-4
- Genesis 26:4-5
- Exodus 3:4-6, 13-15
- Exodus 6:1-3
- Exodus 33:1
- Deuteronomy 1:8
- Luke 1:46-55
- Romans 4:1-5
- Matthew 21:28-32
- Psalm 51:1-10
- Romans 4:5-8
- Psalm 32:1-11
- Psalm 86:1-7
- Psalm 85:1-13
- 1 John 1:6-10
- Matthew 6:9-14
- Romans 4:8-14
- Genesis 15:4, 1-6
- James 2:18-26
- Genesis 26:5
- Genesis 22:1-4
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Genesis 22:5-18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 4
- Exodus 32
- Matthew 3
- 1 Corinthians 6
- Isaiah 1
- Romans 2:4
- Joel 2; 3
- Matthew 18
- 1 Chronicles 35
- Psalm 103
- Genesis 17

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Book: *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop

Sermons:

- *Obey the Voice of God*
- *I AM That I AM*

Booklet: *The Grace of God in the Old Testament*

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