

All by Faith

by Don McClure

Faith is the basis for acceptance before God, and circumcision is a sign of righteousness, but not the means of righteousness.

Duration: 47:12

Scripture: Matthew 23:27-28, Luke 18:9-14, John 3:16, Romans 3:23-24, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:1-9

Topics: "Faith And Grace", "Righteousness By Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a personal experience with his wife and a can of beans to illustrate a larger point about the nature of relationships. He emphasizes that relationships are not based on performance or fulfilling certain conditions, but rather on commitment and fellowship. The speaker then discusses the significance of circumcision as a sign of righteousness and faith in the story of Abraham. He highlights the danger of turning good things, like prayer, into rules and conditions for blessing, instead emphasizing the importance of relying on God's grace and empowerment.

Transcript

Romans 4, verse 9, talking about, if you'll recall, Abraham and his faith, and Paul's tremendous stress on how Abraham was counted to be righteous. Verse 9, cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also. For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet been uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all of them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also, you know, who walked in the steps of faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet been uncircumcised.

Now this is a very difficult or awkward sort of a section of scripture, just sometimes just to read and understand. But here, Paul is continuing in this section on that faith, or pardon me, that Paul is bringing the topic essentially that it is by faith, and it is by faith alone, that anybody has any hope of any form of acceptance at all before God, that any declaration of righteousness, any acceptance before God, any fellowship or relationship with God is entirely on the basis of faith. That is Paul's whole subject here in this chapter.

And also you might remember as well, he's writing to a very religious group of people, for the most part Hebrews, Jews themselves, who were raised themselves under all sorts of rules and regulations and rights and conditions. And they had been told essentially their entire lives that the things that they had to do, they had to do these certain things if they were ever going to be accepted by God, if they were ever going to please God at all and find any real standing, virtually their entire upbringing, all of their life was very conditional. And here Paul is coming along with some rather earth-shattering sort of things, and he says that is not true.

Paul is saying all of the works and all the rules and all the regulations and all the rights and all the world will never work. And Paul of course, as you'll recall, as we've been saying in the last study as well, if you were with us last week, he uses Abraham, which is of course to the children of Israel, their father, the patriarch of all of Judaism, the first Jew, the one that was separated, that became the father of the nation of course. He is the chief cornerstone essentially of their entire religion and their understanding of God.

And here Paul is telling them in a sense, he's saying, hey, you've always heard and always been taught that this is the way you ought to live. And he says, well, why don't we just take a little look and see if this is how Abraham lived. Let's see if this is how Abraham found acceptance or righteousness before God.

And so Paul here, he's essentially talking about, you know, coming before God, acceptance before God, and living before God. And again, another thing you might point out as well is here, remember that Paul was a man that I suppose when you want to look at him, you won't find anybody I suppose around that worked so hard in all the ranks of Judaism I suppose as did, you know, Saul of Tarsus, of course, Paul the apostle as well. When you look at somebody in the way he lived, in the way he struggled, in the effort he put forth, I don't suppose you'll find more modern day, at least in their time, authority on trying to get right with God than Paul himself.

Paul as well, he even said of his own self in Philippians chapter three, he says, finally, my brethren, chapter three, verse one, he says, rejoice in the Lord to write these same things unto you. To me indeed is not grievous, but for you, he said, it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, be fair, beware of the concision.

For we are of the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and we have no confidence in the flesh. And he says, though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I mourn. Circumcised in the eighth day of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and concerning the law, a Pharisee.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless. But what things were gain unto me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss.

For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done that I may win Christ. Here when you look at the apostle Paul, you are looking at a guy there who knew religion. He was, I suppose, your classic Sunday school brat, or Sabbath, actually a Sabbath school brat, I suppose there.

He kicked the slats, I'm sure, out of the crib in Sunday school. He was one that he grew up in it all through life, there in the temple. There's where he learned how to walk and how to talk and how to read and how to write.

And everything he seemed to learn, he learned in the temple. From his eighth day, when he was on the right day, presented to God, his pedigree was right, his effort was right, his own energy was right, his sacrifice of his life, it was his entire way of life there, one to live in a way that would bring pleasure to God. And here Paul, not only is he an authority in his own self by his own experience, but he doesn't look at that so much here.

He looks at Abraham. And there he wants to tell us essentially there that if you are going to ever trust in any rites, you know, in a sense there of religion, you're going to be in trouble. Because here Paul essentially he turns to the most fundamental of all rites and all of Judaism, I suppose there, that of a person ever identifying themselves with God when he turns to circumcision.

And here as he looks at this rite, here Paul, he asks the question essentially there, he says the importance there is when did Abraham receive this rite of circumcision? That identifying mark that separated his life is unto God. It's one of the most important aspects of Paul's entire argument essentially. For here Paul says in Romans 4.9, he says, cometh this blessedness there upon the circumcision only or upon the uncircumcision also.

For we say that faith is reckoned unto Abraham for righteousness. He says, I have been telling you that it is by faith that Abraham was accepted before God and was declared righteous. Now the Jews over here will say, no, Abraham was righteous because he was circumcised.

He was the first and the foremost of all of those that were ever circumcised. They're having that mark of a consecrated life to God. And by taking that, that signified the fact that now God accepted him.

And, but here Paul, as he says in verse 10, well, then how then was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision. In other words, was Abraham declared righteous by God when he was circumcised or before he was circumcised? And his answer of course is right there. He says not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

And of course, just to refer a little bit back here, let me take you back. You might turn to Genesis chapter 17, verse seven. For here, God tells Abraham, he says, and I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee and all their generations for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after you.

God is telling Abraham, I'm going to have a covenant with you and all of the generations to follow. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, a land wherein that thou art a stranger and all of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God.

God said to Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant. Therefore thou and thy seed after thee and their generations, this is my covenant, which he shall keep between me and you and thy seed after the every man child among you shall be circumcised and he shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. Here, God tells Abraham very clearly, he said, we are establishing a covenant here.

It is going to be carried on from every generation following you there of your descendants. It is going to be one in which you are going to do and that you are going to have every man child born afterwards is circumcised there each and every one. And it should be a token of the covenant near.

God simply says there it is a token of it very clearly. This is what it is all about. But unfortunately, what the Jews did is they took that which was a token of something and they made it into a right that by going through that right, you are now declared righteous.

You are now declared accepted. And of course, that's something that's that that's sort of an error is is is not uncommon and not only happened all the way through the Old Testament, it happens into the new covenant as well for Christians, many of them, you know, the in the early church when Paul was actually writing to them, they were still under tremendous fear of the Jews, though they had come to Christ, they had realized that Jesus did die for them forgave their sin, had atoned for them, they had opened their heart, they'd come to him. But yet at the same time, they were under tremendous pressure by the Judaizers, which is why books like Galatians and Colossians and others were written Hebrews.

They're telling the Jews that had come to Christ. No, you are not under the law. You are under grace.

It is all by faith. But here they were under tremendous pressure now to go on, even though now in the new covenant had been established in Christ, and they were still having every one of them circumcised, they were insisting on upon for all the new converts to get circumcised. And until that was happening in the early church for a time, their their conversion was questioned and unacceptable.

And, of course, these things have also shifted over essentially in many other rights, I suppose you could say in the church, even today, many are oftentimes raised, I'm sure many of you grew up under all sorts of rights and rules and regulations that were conditional on any suggestion that if you did not fill these things and fulfill them, you would wonder at all if you were really saved and accepted to God. But here Paul's great point here is, is that this was not the way it was with Abraham. Abraham was somebody who was declared righteous, actually 14 years before he was circumcised.

If you go back to Genesis chapter 15, if you still got your finger there in Genesis 17, you there you'll note there in Genesis 15 verse six, it says, and he Abraham believed in the Lord and was counted unto him for righteousness. This is some 14 years before he even had the token or the symbol of his covenant with God that he by faith he had given himself and surrendered himself to God some 14 years before he himself even had the mark of circumcision. God already had accepted him.

He was already declared righteous with no right, with no rules, with no regulations at all, unconditional. The right had absolutely nothing to do with redemption. The right was merely a response to redemption.

It's almost like in a sense that, you know, you might look at it in the issue of being married almost or something there. I mean, there are responsibilities in a marriage, but at the same time, you're not married merely because you do the responsibilities. You know, it's something there that maybe, you know, I'm not married simply because I may buy the food and Jean cooks it.

I am not married because of the fact that I may be, you know, pay the house payment and she decorates it. Yeah, I'm not married because I do such and such and she does such and such. I am married because we went through a public confession some 35 years ago, it'll be in the next couple of months, where based upon, you know, sharing publicly our love for the Lord, for one another.

And we made a commitment to one another. And we had not, at that point, I had not bought her a house. I had kind of bought her a ring in a sense that I actually had picked it up and started making payments on it.

But I hadn't done anything to earn, you know, the marriage, you might say, it was something there. That's just when the indebtedness started, you know. How's it going to marriage? Wonderful wife.

She halves my sorrows, doubled my joys and quadruples my expenses, something like that. But anyway, the thing is, is that if a marriage was based upon maintaining rights, being able to maintain the rules or the regulations, and that was it, a marriage could be extremely unstable. Ours would have been tremendously unstable for a long time.

It was based on me providing a home. We're in trouble. I was trying providing, you know, other things like cars for me and other things.

But at any rate, we won't get into that tonight. But it was something there that if she's waiting for me to do certain things in order to say we're married or me, you know, I can tell this, it's actually 35 years ago now, but waiting for her to cook. She, she kind of grew up actually in going to some wonderful Christian private schools where they did the cooking for her.

And so we got married. And one of the first, I remember coming home from a honeymoon. I walked into the kitchen.

I don't know how I'm getting into this and I'm in trouble. I already know I'm in trouble here, but what am I doing? I walked into the kitchen and here Jean is reading a can of beans, looking for instruction. She says, there's no instructions on this thing.

I said, what? She says, there's no instructions. I said, honey, any bum by any railroad track knows how to cook beans. You know, that's when I had a hint, we were in trouble.

She's done quite wonderful since then that is 35 years ago. But the, the thing is, is if you go on the basis of performance and the ability to fulfill rights and now to say we are married, no, it is because of a fellowship because of a commitment because of a relationship. And so also with God, there are certain things that happen because the commitment is there because the fellowship is there because the union has happened.

And here, Paul in verse 11, he says, for he received about Abraham. He says, he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised that he might be the father of all of them that believe though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also. And the father of circumcision unto them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father, Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Here he is looking. And he said, Abraham, it was purely something that occurred between Abraham and God. There was an affection.

There was a love. There was a redemptive act of mercy and atonement and forgiveness with Abraham doing nothing for it, being declared absolutely righteous without any change in his behavior, conditioned or being conditioned upon it based only on Abraham believing that there was a God in the world that so loved him, that there was a God that could look at him as he was incapable, unable to perform an acceptable standard at all. He just looked.

He says, listen, I love you and I care for you. I forgive you. I declare you righteous.

Do you believe me? And here Paul essentially wants to go on and tell us why Abraham essentially was given the right and he did not of circumcision. And you see, it did not give him righteousness there, but it confirmed righteousness that he already had. It was something there like the wedding ring or something there.

It confirmed the vows have been made. And this is a token of the fellowship. This is an identifying mark, a confirmation of it happening.

You know, Paul had turned essentially what he's doing here is he turning the Jewish world almost, you might say upside down. It was not the Gentile at all that had to come to the Jew for circumcision and salvation. But rather than that, he's saying the Jew needs to go to the Gentile for faith and just realize that exactly what God was doing to Abraham, he is now doing to the Gentile.

He is now doing to every human being out there that will simply look at Christ without any right, any mark, any identifying thing, any work within themselves. And here it was something there. When you look at Abraham, his righteousness was all of God, all initiated by God.

Abraham, all that anybody can ever do, Abraham included, is merely respond. When you look at how Abraham got blessed, it was all of God. God was the one who brought up the topic.

God was the one. Abraham wasn't out there for years begging God, hey, I want to be the father of a nation. I want land and I want territory.

I want blessings and I want a descendant and I want a Messiah, you know, or anything like this. Wanted nothing. God came to Abraham, said if you'll follow me, if you'll believe me.

And he took him out and he says, look, if you'll just trust me and you believe in who I am, he says, you looked in the north, south, east and the west. All of that have I given into you and your seat after you. If you will trust me, if you will put faith in me, there he should simply say, I'll tell you, there'll never be anybody able to stand against you.

Whoever blesses you, I'll bless them. Whoever curses you, I'll curse them. And he looked, he said, if you will trust me, he said, you look to the stars of the sky or the sands of the sea, so shall thy descendants be.

And here he says to him when he has a wife who has been barren for 75 years old. And yet here at the same time, when you look at this, God brought it all up. God was the one to do it.

God made all the promises. All he wanted was to look at Abraham and said, Abraham, will you believe me for it? And the right of circumcision was merely Abraham's, you know, ring in a sense, Abraham's response, Abraham's covenant agreement with the vow in a sense saying, yes, I understand what you've done. And I, you know, I, because of what you've done, because of the promises, because of the blessing, 14 years afterwards, he now comes around to where God says here is the right, but he didn't do it to get it.

He did it because he had it. And Paul also, though, he wants to go on and tell us another thing. I'll get to in a moment why this is so critical to understand, but he tells them, he says, it's not only the rights of religion that are, that are totally a waste.

It is also essentially they're the rules of religion for in verse 13, he says for the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of

faith. Not only there was he declared righteous there by faith and that the promises came, but also it wasn't through rights that he took there. And it wasn't through rules essentially that he kept.

It wasn't through the law, but through the righteousness of faith for they, which are of the law be heirs. Pardon me for if they, which are of the law, they be heirs. Well, faith is made void in the promises of none effect because the law work at the wrath, but where no law is, there is no transgression here.

He looks at him. Essentially he says, listen, if Abraham merely got what he got because he kept laws, then faith is void. It means nothing.

And the promise he says there is of no effect, but actually he says, because the law work with wrath for where no law is, there is no transgression essentially here. When you stop and realize the Jews by this time, they actually prided themselves and, and their whole religion based upon their rights and their rules, the rights that they, you know, that they kept in the rules that they kept and they had circumcision and they had the law that separated them from the rest of the world. And of course they had a whole huge list of dues and don'ts.

But here Paul tells us the great promises of Abraham's faith were not because he kept the laws at all, or the rules as a matter of fact, he says there, there wasn't the law. Anyway, at the time when this happened, the mosaic law, Moses's law wasn't even around for hundreds of years still yet. He couldn't keep your laws.

He didn't even know about them. They weren't even made. And so you are looking at the very father of your faith who received all of these promises.

The Messiah was to come to him, through him. All of the nations of the world were to be blessed because of him. The land separate of all of Israel given to him, all of the blessings of life.

And all he did was stand there doing nothing. There was no law to keep. There was no right to keep.

There was no identifying behavior or mark. There was nothing. Just God looking at him saying, what do you think of it? Will you trust me? He says, yeah, this is all right.

It's all yours. And then as the years went by, there were other things that happened in a response to it, but there were only a response to it. The laws of course, were later given.

Of course, we maybe need to mention a moment on that. They were later given to the children of Israel through Moses and as a covenant people, but notice as well, even when it was given to the children of Israel, it was given to them when they had already been brought out of bondage. They had already been delivered mightily by the love of God.

And so the laws never delivered them in the first place. God brought him through the red sea, brought him out there and saved them and redeemed them, made them his own. All of this, they had no law.

Later on at Mount Sinai, they got the law, but the laws weren't even there when they had their own deliverance themselves as a nation. It wasn't there. They only had the blood of the lamb.

They only had that which we celebrated tonight, that mark there when the Lord told the children of Israel tonight, he said, you shall take a lamb unto your house. And if your house will be too little for the lamb, then you'll share the lamb of the house. And he says, then you'll take the blood, you'll, you'll sacrifice the

lamb.

And he says, and then you'll take the blood of the lamb and you'll put on the doors and the little lentils of the house. And when I see the blood, I'll pass over you. He says, I'm going to judge, you know, the firstborn of all every man of every beast and all of Israel, all of Egypt.

I am the Lord. And he did. But when I see the blood, no rule, no right, no regulation, no standard, just the blood.

If I see the blood, you're redeemed. You're out. You're free.

You're my child. And the laws were not given to deliver, to save anybody at all. They were merely essentially given to maintain the blessings of the deliverance they had received.

There were merely things that God said now, because you have been redeemed because you've been declared righteous, because I love you, because I want to pour out my blessing. There are things that I want to set up for you that I want you to maintain. And if you maintain these things, the wonderful blessings that you will have in your life and know how many of the wonderful old Testament saints did keep them and saw the Lord and walked with the Lord, shared his life and his glory and his love.

And he had some rights, some rules, some regulations there on one hand, later given in Exodus and Leviticus. But they were merely so often to maintain their health and their happiness and their communion and their fellowship with God, a right relationship with one another, how to live, how to walk, how to talk, how to continue enjoying your salvation. There were some things they told don't do.

Look out for the pigs and hogs and worms and bottom fish. They'll get you sicker than a dog. You know, you don't want it.

You can't cook them right. Most likely you'll have all sorts of diseases and plagues. And so he had some things there for them.

We had health risks to them. But essentially the Jews with time, they took these things and they made rights and rules and they set these things up that were merely given in a response to and they replaced them. No, this is you do this not in response to anything.

You do it to get saved. You do it to find yourself pleasing to God and to be acceptable before God. And they took these instructions that ought to help them maintain their lives in the Lord.

And they made them rules for which you can even have a relationship with the Lord. And that was never the case. So here, you know, and now that's how they'd live.

When Jesus came and he looked at the Pharisees around, these guys there who you call them, why did sepulchers in a sense, oh, they kept the laws and all the dietary things and they knew how to fast and how to pray and how to roam the streets looking so spiritual. And they knew about their genealogies and their pedigrees and their education and their membership to the hierarchy, to the temple and all of these other sorts of things. And but at the same time, they meant absolutely nothing at all.

Tragically, we so often do the same thing many times ourselves. We have things if you don't have if you are not a member of a church, I wonder if you're a Christian and, you know, sort of a thing. We have all of these sorts of rights and we have rules and regulations so often today, much like the Pharisees.

We can even take some of the most wonderful things God has given that ought to be a response to what has been done. And we have made them a rule and a condition for blessing. Some of them can be very wonderful things.

You know, thou shalt pray two hours a day. And I'll be spiritual if you're not, if you don't pray a couple hours a day. How can you call yourself a child of God? He sent his son into the world to redeem you.

The most wonderful thing ever done. And you don't even give him two hours a day. What in the world, who are you? How can you think of yourself as a Christian? You ought to be praying and we can make a rule out of it and a regulation out of it.

As I mentioned last week, if you're here for this study, that is one of the things that I, you know, when I went off and I was going to Bible college in England and I determined I want to be a Christian. I want to be a good Christian and therefore I'm really going to pray. And I'd get up early and I'd go off and pray.

And I wanted to make sure I was really a prayer warrior and I was really about the business of praying. And I had a prayer list and I'd get there and I'd begin to pray. And I'd pray for the world.

I pray for missionaries and I pray for the gospel going out and for Billy Graham and for the churches that preach the gospel. And I'd pray for all sorts of Christian organizations around. And I'd pray for my parents and my brothers and my sisters and my cousins and my uncles and my aunts.

And I'd pray for people I knew and people in school. And I'd pray and pray and pray and pray. And then after I'd prayed my heart out, I'd look at my watch and eight minutes had gone by, you know, or something.

And I think, oh man, this is not prayer. So I'd start asking for more prayer requests and what can I specifically pray for you for or something, you know, so I could really become a prayer warrior. And because somehow or another, if I pray and I really break through the kingdom of heaven somehow or another and I get through the veil, you know, or something and I strut right in before the throne, God's going to bless me and everything I ask of Him, you know, sort of a thing.

And prayer was something, you know, tragically, it was something I was doing in order to get blessed. I was praying because I wanted to get blessed. I was wanting to be spiritual.

And prayer was prayer will make you spiritual. And prayer will do this and prayer will do that. Amazing things, you know, you go on.

I don't think it has anything to do with the amount or with the issue of prayer so much. I wanted His hand upon me. And so there was something there of how much you want to pray and how prayer is going to be this great thing.

But it isn't. Interestingly enough, this afternoon, off the wire services, AP, Duke University Medical Center cardiologists put God to the test to find out if prayer helps to heal the sick. The controversial results, there's no scientific evidence that prayer heals, reports the Telegraph of London.

The three-year study, which involves 750 heart patients in nine hospitals, as well as 12 prayer groups in different faiths located around the world, was conducted after earlier, but less extensive research from the University of Wales in the late 1990s, suggesting prayer has a measurable beneficial effect on healing. But this study, 750 heart patients who were waiting and angioplasty procedures were recruited for the

experiment. And it goes on through, but basically they said prayer didn't work as far as any way they could evaluate it.

Well, I could have told him that a long time ago, prayer does not work. God works, but prayer doesn't. And there's a huge difference.

If I am doing something in order that this will work, and I can take one of the most wonderful things God has given to me, prayer, communion with him, the opportunity to come before his throne of grace, to find myself sitting in his presence, to draw upon his power and his love and his life and his strength and his patience and his kindness. But if I go into that same thing of which I could be drenched with all that he is, but I go in there something that if I do this, I'll get blessed. Prayer does not work.

If I am doing it in order to get, if I am doing it just like they did with the law or with a right or with a rule or a regulation. No, it's already been done. Whether you know it or not, every one of us, if you've accepted Jesus Christ, this very moment in time, you are seated in high heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

You're already in the throne of grace. You're sitting there right now. You couldn't be more wonderfully positioned.

You couldn't have more already promised, already given. And if you just decide you're going to pray in order to get something, that can almost be a complete denial that you've already got it. No, you pray because you have it, not to get it.

And we can literally, like the children of Israel, we can do a thing in order to get rather than in response to, we can do it to get. And if we're doing it to get, we'll just exhaust ourselves. You can take the most wonderful thing, Bible reading.

I did the same thing. Prayer, I was told, pray and read your Bible. And so I'd be down, I'd be praying and praying and praying, trying to pray.

And it was so hard because after, you know, I'd be praying and my mind did go off. So then, okay, I'm going to read my Bible and then I'd be reading my Bible. Next thing I know, I don't even know what, what it's about.

I, my mind went off three minutes earlier, but I'm still kind of reading through it. I don't know what I'm reading now. No, I got to go back.

Where did I skip off? Where did I lose my train of thought? You know, well, two chapters there, if I'm going to get 15 done and three chapters ago, I checked out. So I got to go back and try to get into it so I can be God. And then when I still, my mind would space out.

I know what it is. I'm going to meditate on it. And the only way I can meditate it, I'm going to memorize it.

So I'd start working on Bible memorization. And I, interestingly, I learned a lot, memorized a lot. I can still, I can go to sleep.

I can, I can quote the Sermon on the Mount, three chapters in my sleep. You know, the, I, I, a lot of, I've memorized most of John, a lot of John, a lot of some of the epistles, a lot of, a bunch of Psalms, all of your, I'm going to get. And when I got him, God's going to owe me blessing, you know, just like the little memory verses that we so often do with kids in Sunday school who get, Oh, you got a Johnny, John three 16, give

that boy a prize, you know? And, and that's exactly what I was doing.

The most wonderful things in the world to get a prize in here. So often the exact same things I was doing, not because I already had the prize. If God spared, not his own son, will he not give us all things? The moment I'd come to Christ, he'd given me everything he's got.

Now he says, well, here, I gave you the greatest thing, but just for fun, I want you to work for anything else, buddy. You know what I mean? Just think that through. If he spared not his own son.

And if you have the sun, you can't get anymore in here, Paul, he's trying to tell them with all of these things. Now it doesn't mean that I don't pray. It doesn't mean I don't read my Bible.

I open up believing perhaps more than ever, but at the same time, there's a huge difference whether you're doing it for or from whether there's something that is a result that I'm going to get it. And here is Paul wants to make this so clear to them. He goes on in verse 14.

He says, for if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void. The promise of none effect. In other words, it's either by trying or it's by trusting.

It's either by law or it's by faith. It's either by works or it's by grace, either tonight, regardless of where you've been and what you've done. You may have been somebody all day long.

You have, you've been wonderful. You got up this morning and you prayed for, you know, our president and every member of the cabinet by name. And you prayed for every senator and every member of the house of representative and every governor and every congressman and every buddy else.

I don't know. You could just go down through the list and you've been wonderful. And then you've witnessed, you wrote them all a track or whatever all day long.

You've been a wonderful servant and you've done wonderful things. But that does not put you sitting here tonight in any place where you have any greater right to access to God's love or to his presence than the one that may walk in and sit down next to you tonight. And he's never even known of Christ.

Who's just gone through his third divorce and lost his 10th job and, you know, and just got out of prison. That one sits there because in heaven's sight, God still, just as he did with Abraham, he looks at both and he says, well, you believe me? And one sometimes can sit there and say to a, hello, God, where have you been all day? Have you not seen what I have been doing? And he can very easily, just like a Pharisee say, wait a minute, God, excuse me. I thank you that I am not as other men, you know, I fast and I tithe, you know, and I do all of these things and I give to the poor.

But then the other man, the publican who sits next and can't even so much as lift up his head towards heaven, but he smote himself on the breast. He says, oh God, be merciful unto me as sinner. Jesus said, I tell you, that man had his prayer answered that day.

And that is not only the way I come to Christ. That is the way I stay in Jesus. That is the way I live in Jesus.

Because our righteousness, the Bible makes it quite clear is still is filthy rags. No matter how long we've lived, how great, how wonderfully we walked, how many people we've led to Christ, how many people we have blessed, how much we have given to the kingdom of heaven, how much of our heart and our life has

been poured into the soil of the body of Christ. Still, none of us are a thing compared to our savior.

And we have no right to anything. It is merely his mercy. And he looks and he says, will you believe me? And you're not only this is now you just enter into a into a relationship with Jesus.

It's the grounds on which it's got to be maintained. It's how you keep it alive. It would be as soon as you take it to any other thing to where now happiness or fellowship is conditioned on behavior.

You're in trouble. Maybe you've been married for 50 years. You're sitting there tonight at dinner and your wife burned the dinner.

And you looked at that thing and you looked at her and said, well, gag me with a spoon woman, you know, or something there. I don't know if I love you anymore. She probably would gag you with a spoon, I suppose, if you did that.

But if you as soon as you put it on a on a basis other than a commitment of love. And upon and you base it on the last moments of behavior. And so to it, Jesus.

And the reason that our time's up here, that's the reason. But the but I just want to close it with this, because what is so critical about this, and the reason this is so important is not only does it have to do with our, you know, standing before God, but Paul is about to when he when he gets into Romans five through eight, he is going to talk about the most awesome life in the world, life in the spirit, life in God's power, life in his presence, exchanging my flesh for his spirit, being filled and dominated, being overcome by his life and his love and his power. And he wants us to know that it that that you got to understand all of this, not just the simple little blessings that may come here and there, or just the anything in life.

Everything is by faith. It is none, it is all totally and completely by be able to believe that God just simply looks at us as I want to fill you with my spirit. Would you like it? I want to show you how to reckon the old man to be dead in Christ.

Would you like it? I want to show you how to walk in a dynamic. You can't earn it. Don't even think of it.

You can join it. You can become worthy of it. It's going to be some of the most incredible life in all the world.

You have no right to it. You know, the thing to me, I've been a Christian now in for over 35 years. And the thing that's amazing when I stopped didn't realize there's I realize I am no different.

I'm not trying to be humble, just honest. I'm no different than the day I got saved. No different than the day before I got saved.

I am. I am capable of virtually everything I ever was before I knew Christ. I'm fully capable of it.

That same nature that drove my life then and that was was was there and was in power and was enthroned is right there waiting for any opportunity it has to say, hey, let me show you how to handle this. We've been arguing for 35 years. And every once in a while.

Three or four times a day, I give him a shot, you know, and then I see the incredible, the incredible nature, the full potential still there. But to sit there and then to realize at the same time God turns around and in his mercy and his grace, he loves me and he empowers me and he wants to bless me. He wants to use me

and realize there that God looks and he says, of course, you're no different.

You never will be any different. The day you take your last breath. Your flesh will still be capable of everything it ever was.

But I want to introduce you to a life in the spirit. You can't earn it. You can't become worthy of it.

There is no rule, no right, no regulation, no behavior, nothing that you can do to get it other than simply being able to look and realize Jesus. Will you feel me? Will you empower me? Will you take over my life? Will you do this work? And he wants to look and say, well, of course I will. I did it for Abraham.

He didn't do anything to get it either. Can you imagine Moses? I just think sometimes, you know, the Bible says about Moses, he was the meekest man on the planet, meekest man in the face of the earth. And I think a lot of people think that's incredible.

I mean, this guy, he ruled the course of nature for 40 years. You know, I mean, this guy, you know, water out of rocks, man out of heaven, opened up rivers, makes the earth shake, swallows people up. I mean, this guy literally ruled nature, the world for 40 years.

And yet the Bible says he was the meekest man on the planet, the most humble guy in the world. And the reason very simply is because I am absolutely convinced Moses had no better idea than you and I, how it happened. Moses was somebody I'm convinced they're absolutely convinced this because Moses learned that if God says something, he just trusted him and he put his faith in.

Moses saw the things happen that were incredible, just like everybody else. I think if they had CNN and ABC and NBC back when Moses was around and after they got through the Red Sea and they close it up and the, you know, the Egyptian armies floating down the river, water's out of rock, man is out of heaven, all these awesome things. And they came in, interviewed him and stuck the mic, Moses.

Tell me. Whoa, man. I mean, please tell me if it's okay with you.

You know, or something. I don't want to bother you. You got a minute, you know, or something.

They're probably very gracious to him and say, how did you do that? Moses probably would have looked at you. Got me. I haven't got the faintest idea.

The Lord just told me, go stick that rod out. And I stuck it out. That thing opened up.

Was that heavy or what? I think he looked there as much as anybody. He says, he just told me and I did it. He said, go before Pharaoh.

Say, let my people go. I'll walk before him. Pharaoh.

But somehow or another, he got it out. And after a few little trials, probably big ones, but ones there where he came to realize I don't know how he does it. And I don't know why he picked me.

For the love of God. Only way I know he might have done it. But he did it.

And I believed him. And he did it. And when you and I realize God wants to bless us like this, and he's just waiting for us not to earn it, not to get him obligated, but just to realize, Lord, would you please take my life and fill it and use it? Not by rules, rights, regulations, by love.

Even for you tonight to believe that for you. Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for your love.

We thank you for this unbelievable God that you are. You are no respecter of persons. And Lord, just as much as you came to Moses or to David or Elijah or to Daniel or you came to Abraham, none of them earned it.

You just came and said, will you believe me? Because if you will, I'll bless you like you can't believe it. And you won't in and of yourself. You'll certainly wonder how it happened as much as anybody else.

But that's how I love you. And I love to work like that. And Lord, I pray that tonight that you would cause us to realize as we stand here, sit here before you, realizing we have not fulfilled our part.

But then when we realize, well, we have no part. I guess that's what Paul's saying, isn't it, Lord? It's just your part in us finally realizing, well, if you spare not your own son, what an incredible thing. What else won't you do now? And Lord, I pray that you would just do a work in our hearts where we'd realize the blessing you want to give upon us.

Not because we can come to you and say, Lord, bless me because I've done this or done that or been there. But Jesus, just bless me because you are who you are. And you seem to love me in a way that I can't understand, but I long for it.

Lord, may you take your word, fulfill it in our hearts. And may we believe you and may we be reckoned righteous. And may the blessings of God flow in our lives, even tonight in Jesus name.

Amen.

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