

1. **Introduction:** Having explained God’s way of salvation through grace by faith in 3:21-31, Paul gives two examples to prove the validity of his explanation – Abraham and David.
  - Twice (Rm 1:2; Rm 3:21) Paul has pointed out, that salvation through the gift of God’s righteousness apart from the Law, was announced beforehand.
  - Now he will show that not only was salvation by grace previously announced, but that it is the only way anyone has ever been saved or ever will be saved.
  - Paul begins with Abraham, the acknowledged father of the Jewish people. There are many great people mentioned in the Bible: Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel and many others.
  - Any of these, if asked, would have confirmed that Abraham is their father in the faith.
2. **Romans 4:1-5:** *What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.*
  - God promised Abraham that (1.) he would become a great nation (Gen 12:2), and (2.) he would become the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:5). Both promises were fulfilled physically and spiritually.
  - Physically, Abraham became the father of the Jewish people through Isaac, and father of the Arab people through Ishmael. Spiritually, Abraham became the father of all true believers, both Jews and Gentiles. For believers, he is our father in the faith.
3. **Romans 3:10b-12:** *None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*
  - Like all fallen humans, Abraham had no natural good in him. He could not be saved by works of goodness. So how was he saved? Once, God took Abraham out under the night sky and promised him offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven.
  - At the time, Abraham was 85 years old and had no children. What God said to him seemed impossible. Yet, Abraham believed God! (Gen 15:6), “*And he believed the Lord, and he (God) counted it to him as righteousness.*”
  - Abraham’s belief of God’s words was counted to him as righteousness. That is justification by faith recorded in the Bible for the first time.
  - To what does “counted it to him” refer? “Count” is an accounting term. For something to be counted as righteousness, it must be genuine righteousness, or the books will be in error.
  - What did Abraham believe that was so important God counted it to him as righteousness?

4. **Genesis Account:** Abraham's original name was Abram but, God changed it to Abraham when he was 99 years old. Abram had a long life of listening to God, believing Him, and doing as God asked him to do.
- At God's instruction, Abram moved all his household, possessions and people, from Ur to Haran and then Haran to Canaan.
  - When he left Haran, Abram was to go to a land God would show him, an action of deep trust. If Abram did as God said, then He would bless him and make of him a great nation.
  - Abram did as God asked leaving Haran when he was 75 years old. In Canaan, God made a covenant with Abram promising him a son, a multitude of descendants, and that He would be Abram's shield and very great reward.
  - After living in Canaan 10 years, Abram and Sarah still had no children. Hoping to gain an heir, Sarah, with no word from God, gave her handmaiden, Hagar, to Abram to see if she would conceive. She did.
  - When Abram was 86 years old, Hagar bore Ismael. When Abram was 99 years old, Sarah was still childless. In a vision, God declared a covenant with Abram, promised to make him the father of a multitude of nations. God changed Abram's name to Abraham.
  - As a sign of the covenant, Abraham and all males in his entourage were to be circumcised as were future male descendants. Abraham did as God said. God promised Sarah that a year later she would have a son of their own flesh. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100.
  - The overall point is that, from the first mention of Abraham in Scripture, he listened to God, believed God, and did what God asked him to do.
  - The taking of Hagar, leading to the birth of Ishmael, was not following God's disclosed plan. It was an attempt by Abraham and Sarah to create a human fix in the face of doubt God would yet do what He had promised.
  - A few other times Abraham fell into similar traps deviating from God's leading (and getting into trouble when he did).
  - Most of the time, Abraham believed God and properly acted on God's instructions.
  - At the point in time of Genesis 15:6 (quoted by Paul in Romans 4:3), Abraham believed something so great in significance that it led God to count that specific belief to Abraham as righteousness.
  - Abraham's belief (faith) was the vital channel through which God justified Abraham (declared him righteous), but that justification was based on the content of belief not merely on the action of belief.
  - What did Abraham believe that was so important? Consider the various stages of belief and obedience that preceded the belief that was counted as righteousness.
5. **Genesis 12:1-3:** *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless*

***those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***”

- In this passage there are 5 “I will” promises by God. Abram responds in faith by obeying.
  - The 5 promises are (1.) show Abram to a land, (2.) make him into a great nation, (3.) bless him and make his name great, (4.) bless those who bless him, curse those who dishonor him, and (5.) in him bless all the families of the earth.
  - The author of Hebrews describes this even in Heb 11:8 focusing on Abram’s willingness to become a pilgrim journeying to an unknown destination chosen by God: ***“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”***
  - In this beginning of Abram’s faith pilgrimage: The initiative is entirely by God. Abram’s history was that of a worshipper of false gods. God graciously calls Abram to follow Him.
  - Not only did Abram not do anything to merit God’s appearance to him, he also didn’t respond to God’s promise with any questions – he simply obeyed.
  - Clearly this is a case of what we call “election” – God’s initiative all the way – just as in our own salvation. Abram’s role is to trust and obey.
  - God’s promise to Abram is powerful and far-reaching. It is a promise from One who does not lie, One who can do even that which seems humanly impossible.
  - God can and did reach into that pagan society and call out a man to become the founder of a special people from whom will come the Savior for the nations.
  - In Paul’s time, most Jews believed Abraham was justified by good works and circumcision.
  - They believed despite the facts. Abraham was justified 14 years before circumcision was instituted and 400 years before the Law was given. It would be many years before the Son was incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth.
  - Abraham’s justification as cited in Gen 15:6 is quoted 3 times in the NT (Rm 4:3; Gal 3:6; James 2:23). Did Christ have something to do with Abraham’s justification? Paul says yes!
  - In Gal 3, Paul comments on Abraham and Christ saying, Abraham knew of Christ, looked forward to His coming, and trusted Him as Savior.
6. **Galatians 3:5-6**: ***Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— <sup>6</sup> just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?*** God sent the Spirit, who
7. **Galatians 3:8**: ***“... foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”***
- Abraham believed God in spiritual matters and God, “beforehand” revealed to him the gospel and that in him (and his descendant) all the nations would be blessed.
  - That information is from Gen 12:3 at the beginning of Abraham’s journeys. His faith always was directed at spiritual things (not merely at obtaining a land of his own). He believed the blessing of salvation would come to him, his descendants, and other nations.

8. **Galatians 3:9**: *So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*
- The salvation promise to Abraham extends to all who believe.
9. **Galatians 3:13-14**: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*
- Paul says that Abraham’s faith looked toward redemption from the curse of the Law so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles.
  - The blessing given to Abraham is extended through him to all nations.
  - Redemption is a commercial term clearly illustrated by the act of “redeeming” an item that has been pawned. It was primarily used ancient times concerning redeeming slaves by paying a redemption price.
  - Jesus redeemed believers from slavery to sin by taking our sins to Himself and paying the death penalty due those sins with His own life.
  - Paul says God announced the Gospel to Abraham in advance telling him that all nations would be blessed through him (Gal 3:8) .
  - Gal 3:16 shows how the promise was to be realized.
10. **Galatians 3:16**: *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.*
- Abraham believed in the coming of a savior, a future descendant, a particular individual. He looked forward to the blessing of God through redemption (Gal 3:13).
  - Abraham’s belief in the coming savior-redeemer (Jesus Christ) was the specific faith-belief that was counted to him by God as righteousness.
  - Several times before, Abraham had believed God and obeyed His instructions. But now,
  - Abraham had faith in the critical truth that a future descendant of his would be the promised savior-redeemer.
  - For believing God about the promised savior-redeemer, Abraham was declared to be righteous (justified) based on the effectiveness of Jesus’, yet to come, salvation work.
  - It is Christ’s righteousness that is counted to Abraham. In the same transaction, Abraham’s sins were transferred to Christ.
  - On the cross, Abraham’s sins born by Jesus were judged and punished and God’s wrath due Abraham’s sins was poured out on Christ.
  - Thus, Abraham was saved like everyone who has ever been saved or ever will be saved.
  - Jesus saves, and He alone!