



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 4:9-17

"Justification, Baptism, Assurance"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now we're turning to Scripture, reading this morning Romans chapter 4, verse 9 through verse 17. So if you have your New Testaments, turn there with me and listen as I read these verses. The apostle has just set forth the Doctrine of Justification by Faith as it is seen in the life of Abraham, but he is dealing with people who understand Scripture in its major teachings and so they naturally they would have questions because the people for whom he is writing are either confused over the Doctrine of Justification by Faith or actually believe that a person is justified by doing the works of the law, or perhaps by observing an ordinance such as circumcision. And so now the apostle writes after saying,

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. 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 in 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 being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all 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 who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 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. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Our subject for this morning is, "Justification, Baptism, and the Assurance of Faith." As I have mentioned on more than one occasion to you, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say that Abraham was the greatest human character in the Bible. There are some reasons for thinking that this may well be so. There is the frequency of the mention of his name in the New Testament. Outside of such references as, "Moses saith," or "Moses wrote," Abraham's name stands fourth in frequency of mention behind Paul, Peter, and John, the Baptist. His name is mentioned more often in the Old Testament than the Apostle James, or the Apostle John. It's not surprising, I guess, since in the Old Testament God said to Abraham, "I will make your name great." And as you know his name is great in the three great worldwide religions of Judaism, Mohammedism, and Christianity.

When we look at Romans chapter 4, we notice that Abraham's case is the pattern for justification. In other words, if the apostle were to answer the question, "How is a man justified?" He would be saying to us, as he says here in this chapter, "A man is

justified as Abraham was justified." The Scriptures say concerning Abraham that he believed in the Lord and it was imputed to him for righteousness. And Romans chapter 4 is an exposition of Abraham as the pattern for justification. One of the failures of Rabbinic Theology has been the precedence given to Moses instead of to Abraham. For identified to Moses, great man though he was, and also great man of faith, is the emphasis upon the Law, and as a result, by emphasizing Moses, it has been said that Judaism naturally fell into the error of justification by the deeds of the law. If precedence had been given to Abraham then there is, from the human standpoint alone, more possibility of precedence being given to justification by faith.

The fact that Judaism has misunderstood the place of Abraham is evident in some of the ancient Midrashic works. For example, in Mekilta which is Midrash on sections of the Book of Exodus, it is stated with reference to that very passage, Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the Lord, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," that Abraham was justified by the "merit of faith." Now you can see that the Apostle Paul does not agree with the idea that faith has any merit at all, for he divides men into two categories, the workers and the non-workers. He says, "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth." It is clear from that statement that he regards believing as non-working. That is, when a man believes for justification, he cannot be considered to have worked for his justification.

So Abraham is the pattern. He is the example. He's the prototype of justification, and the justification is a justification by faith, through faith, on the principle of grace. That is, it is a gift of God. Furthermore, Abraham's life is a pattern of Christian life itself. When we turn to the 11th chapter of the Epistle of the Hebrews, we find that in that great catalog of men of faith from Old Testament times, the greatest space is devoted by that author to the life of Abraham. He was a man who had worshiped, it seems, Nannar, the moon God, and now he has come to faith in Yahweh. At one time, he was a devil worshiper. Now he's become a devotee of the Lord God. And the author of that epistle

traces it to the fact that he responded in faith, a faith given by God of course, to the call of God. He was given instructions to go out into a land that was not described for him, and he went out not knowing where he should go.

The apostle is meeting the challenge of faith or legal righteousness. And he argues faith righteousness as over against legal righteousness in chapter 4. And he shows us four things, very briefly, I'll just mention these. He shows us that the Old Testament teaches that justification is by faith. Then he shows that the Old Testament teaches justification apart from any ordinances, even ordinances given by God, such as circumcision. And he shows that the Old Testament teaches justification apart from law works, the things that we do. And, finally, an answer to the question, "What is justifying faith?" he shows that justifying faith is just like Abraham's faith in essence. Now these are the subjects of this 4th chapter. The background of what we are looking at today is found in Genesis chapter 17, where the writer of that great book gives the account of the confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant by the institution of the covenant sign. And what I would like for you to do for just a moment to remind you of the context, is ask you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 17 and let me say just a word or two about the things that Moses writes in this chapter for these are the things that Paul has in his mind when he writes Romans chapter 4 and verse 9 and following. It appears very evident since he cites from this very section.

Now you remember that in Abraham's life he was given, in Genesis chapter 12, certain covenantal promises. The announcement of those promises was made in Genesis chapter 12. And then in Genesis chapter 15, they were ratified to him by a covenantal sacrifice. That's a remarkable chapter. We've already studied it here, not too long ago, a year or so ago. And so we need not go over it again. But you'll remember that it was in the ratification stated by the very process of ratification that the covenant was an unconditional covenant, that God was taking it upon himself to fulfill those great promises that he offered to Abraham. Now in chapter 17, he gives what might be called the

inauguration of the actual working out of the covenant by the covenantal sign of circumcision. We read in the 1st verse,

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying."

This was, incidentally, fourteen years after the ratification of the covenant in Genesis chapter 15. Abraham it is said is ninety-nine years old now. He is beyond the age of giving birth to a child. His body is dead. Paul will tell us in Romans 4. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, the one, the child that was born according to the working of the flesh through Hagar, Sarah's hand maiden. This delay of thirteen years, incidentally, in the fulfillment, or carrying on of work relating to the covenant may have been to test Abraham's faith. Or on the other hand, it may have been chastisement for seeking to accomplish the will of God in the power of the flesh. Abraham had to learn a lesson that we were talking about a moment ago. He had to learn the lesson that God wants us to do his work, but he wants us to do his work on his own principles, by his own principles. And Abram has sought to fulfill the promise of the seed in the power of his physical flesh. But God, nevertheless, has given him unconditional promises, and so he is going to fulfill them, even though he has a servant who is a wayward servant from time to time. Abram falls on his face. And God talks with him, and unfolds and expands those covenantal promises.

Incidentally, when Abraham falls on his face in adoration, it's clear that the Holy Spirit has worked in him to the place where he is not ready to respond to further revelation. It is the adoration which is the means by which he appropriates the blessings of God. True sanctification of a believer always takes place at the foot of our Lord. So

here, sanctification in Abram begins at the Lord's feet, and he's given a new name, and furthermore, he is told that the covenantal promises are his and in the midst of giving them, a few new things are added. I just read verse 8, "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a sojourner, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." That, incidentally, is the end and goal of all of the promises of God. That is, that he will be our God and we shall be his people. That is stated throughout the covenantal program of the Old Testament more than once. And when we read that in the New Testament that finally the new heavens and the new earth are unfolded, it is stated there in Revelation chapter 21 and verse 3, "And Emmanuel himself shall be with them, and be their God." God with them, himself, shall be their God. That is the completion of the program of God, to bring a certain group of people into eternal fellowship with him.

Now having spoken about the things that he was going to do, in verse 9, Moses describes the human responsibility of the covenantal sign. God said,

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. (Now notice the 11th verse because Paul will refer to it in Romans 4, and we'll talk about it in a moment.) And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token (or a sign) of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man

child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

So you can see now that here, long after Genesis chapter 12, long after Genesis chapter 15, the covenantal sign that goes along with the promises is set forth and it is the sign of circumcision. That was an ordinance. That was a rite that Isaac's children, Abraham's children should carry out. It signified the putting away of the old life's sins, and Paul tells us, it was a sign of faith righteousness. It was never intended to be the means of righteousness. It was to be the sign of righteousness. And furthermore, and let me make this vary plain, if a man was a true believer in Jehovah, he would have his male children circumcised. Now if he was not a true believer in Jehovah, then he would not have his children circumcised, and he would be cut off from his people. He would have broken the covenant. So you can see that this circumcision rite was a sign and also a revelation of the spiritual character of those upon whom the obligation had been laid.

It's just as it is today in baptism. Baptism was never intended to be the means of salvation, but it is a revelation of the condition of the heart of the individual. If he has truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism is the sign and the seal of the righteousness that he has by faith. He will see carried out in his own life, baptism, as a testimony to what has happened to him. And furthermore, if a man has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ supposedly, or made profession, but despises the rite of baptism, there is no indication outwardly that that person has truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, baptism is very significant. It is a Revelation ideally of the condition of the human heart. It does not save, but it is the product of the obedience that flows from a saved life.

Now let's turn to the New Testament and listen to the Apostle Paul in the light of what I have said. The apostle, you see, has just argued that justification is by faith, apart from the works of the law. Now he knows from his many hours of dealing with

individuals all over that world of which he was a part that there were people who understood the Bible, and they understood the story of Abraham. They knew something about it, and they knew Abraham had been given the rite of circumcision. And Isaac had been circumcised, and right down through the Old Testament period, males in Israel were circumcised. And, as is so often the case, rather than dealing directly with the Lord God, we tend to fall into the doing of things to make up for personal relationship with him.

It's happened in the case of baptism in our Christian church. Large Christian organizations, many of them, believe that a man is truly saved by baptism that he cannot be saved except by undergoing water baptism. This is often a way to avoid having to deal with the Lord personally. And this happened in Old Testament times. And Paul knew about that. And so he anticipates an objection that no doubt had been raised often with him in his preaching. He had said, "Abraham is justified by faith, not by the works of the Lord, therefore a man is justified by faith." And I can see the apostle on the street corners of that eastern world and somebody shouting out, "But Paul, Abraham was circumcised." And the apostle would have to answer the question of why Abraham's circumcision is not contrary to justification by faith? So that's the way he introduces this particular part of the 4th chapter. He says, "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 in uncircumcision?" Paul, Abraham was circumcised. Yes, Paul would say, But the faith that justified Abraham came when he was uncircumcised, as he says, "Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." So to put it very simply, what you have forgotten, my objective friend, is that Genesis 17 comes after Genesis 15.

Now, I don't think Paul did this, but this is what I would do. I would say, now I want to give you just a little lesson. It's 15, 16, 17, not 17, 16, and 15. That, of course, would make my opponents angry, and that's the difference between Paul and one of his lesser followers. [Laughter] But, nevertheless, that's essentially what Paul is saying. You

have forgotten the order of the chapters. In chapter 15 it is stated, "And he believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." It's not until chapter 17, after he has been pronounced righteous, that he is given the rite of circumcision. So it is clear from that that circumcision does not save, as it is commonly taught among you.

Now of course, one would then ask the question, "Well, what was circumcision then, if it's not the means by which we are saved?" And so in verses 11 and 12 Paul elaborates. He says, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." Now there are two important things that he says here. The first place, he says that circumcision is a sign. It's a token. It's a seal. It's like a label on a bottle or on a box. The label is worthless apart from the contents unless you're a conterer, and then, of course, the label becomes more important than the contents. You go in the store, and you buy the package, tear the label off and throw the contents away because you want to win the big prize. But nevertheless, that's not what Paul is talking about here. He's saying that circumcision was a label. It's a sign. It's worthless apart from the reality. What the Jewish people of whom he was speaking, and any Gentile too who believes that salvation is by baptism, what they have done is to rip off the imprint off of the box and they are boasting in the imprint, and the contents, the reality, the justification by faith is discarded as being worthless. That's the first thing that he says.

But he goes on to say that circumcision had another design. He said, "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be," In other words, circumcision had a particular purpose in mind. What was that purpose that God had in mind? Well first of all, it was that he might be, "The father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them," In other words, Abraham was justified apart from circumcision and circumcision came later in order that men might realize that Abraham is the father of faithful men who are not circumcised. That is, he's the father of

Gentiles who believe, as well as the father of circumcision to them that are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of the faith of our father, Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised. So he said that circumcision is a sign. It's a token. It does not communicate justification. It's a sign of a justification that is already there. And it's designed to portray the fact that Abraham is the father of Gentile believers, and he's the father of Jewish men who walk in the steps of the faith of our father, Abraham, or of Jewish believers. This is the purpose, then, of circumcision. It is a token, and it has as its goal that Abraham shall be the father of the faithful.

This, of course, was the fatal mistake of many of the Old Testament men, or men who lived in the Old Testament times and had some contact with biblical things. They made the fatal mistake of thinking that justification was by circumcision. Circumcision does not secure salvation. Circumcision secured nationality. It was something practiced with Isaac and his seed so that circumcision was something that pertained to Israel or to Gentiles who became a part of Israel. That was their fatal mistake. What they did practically was to take Isaac, in his eight days old circumcision for the model of the saved man, rather than taking Abraham in his uncircumcised state as the model of the saved man.

Now I want to stop for just a moment because this has some very important application to us who live in new covenant days. We're inclined to look back and we say, "Well, that's typical of those days, they don't understand things quite as well as we do. We are much more enlightened and consequently we would not make a mistake like that." That's one thing you learn from the Bible, men are always the same. They are sinners in old covenant days, and they are sinners in new covenant days as well. You would think in the light of this that we would never reach the place where we really thought that justification was through baptism. Would you not? But there is a large religious organization that tells us that original sin is removed by the waters of baptism, and if we are not baptized, we are not saved.

Now you say, "Well they're not Protestants." Yes that's right, they are not Protestants, but there are Protestants also who teach that salvation is through baptism. That it is absolutely necessary for a person to be baptized in order to be saved. Even some that come very close in many ways to the teaching of the word of God. But they teach us that we must be baptized in order to be saved. If they do not teach baptismal regeneration, they teach that baptism is the only means by which we come to salvation, that is, faith and baptism.

Now, let's stop for a moment and ask ourselves a question. Is baptism a work? Well now, the apostle did not have to deal with this specific question because when he wrote they weren't having this problem. It's as the new covenant era grows and develops that these develop, just as in the earliest days, they didn't have problems with circumcision. It's when men who get exposed to spiritual things become dull of hearing. When the second and third generation, when those little children sitting out in the pew here, who are the children of true believers, and all they've heard is the gospel and they become hardened and deadened to it because they've heard it every day, and mothers and fathers don't tell their children that you must have a personal experience of salvation just as we did. When you're not sufficiently suspicious of the profession of your children to be sure that it is a true profession, the result is that finally there becomes deadness and hardness and a confusion of theological things in our minds.

Now, fortunately, in the New Testament the apostle tells us some things in the Epistle to the Galatians that make it very plain where he would stand. There is an epistle written in the New Testament that touches the question of baptism and works. It's the Epistle to the Galatians. Now you know that in Galatians, the apostle argues that salvation is by grace through faith, and what he uses as illustrative of the teaching that he wants to give is the doctrine of circumcision because there were individual who were saying, "One must be circumcised in order to be saved." Now the apostle, with that as the background, says, "No, a man is not saved by works, he's saved by grace." Well now in

the very fact that he says he must be saved by grace and not by works, we learn that in Paul's mind, to be saved by the rite of circumcision is to be saved by works. In other words, circumcision is a work. It is defined in the Epistle to the Galatians as a work.

Now, let's think about baptism for a moment. Is there any parallel between circumcision and baptism? Well circumcision was a work that was performed by human agency. A man performed the work of circumcision upon the male child. Baptism is a work performed by human agency. We stand in the baptistery here and someone comes down. We give their name to the congregation. We ask them to make a profession of faith. I, if I am baptizing, I take their hand in my hand. I put my hand behind their back, and I put them under the water, and I bring them up out of the water. It is a work performed by human agency. Not only that, circumcision is a physical act. It is an act performed on the physical body. When I place someone in water baptism, put them down in the water, bring them up, or even if you sprinkle someone with water, we happen to immerse here, but if you sprinkle someone with water, it is still a physical act, and not only that but it is performed by a material means. Baptism is performed by water. Circumcision is performed with a knife, surgical knife. And finally, circumcision is an act visible to others, and baptism also is an act that is performed in the presence of others as a testimony to the faith that the individual already has had.

Now if circumcision is a work, baptism is also a work, and salvation is not by works of the law, it is by grace. We have a beautiful illustration of this in the 10th chapter of the Book of Acts. There Cornelius, you remember, had a little vision in which it was said to him, "Cornelius what you ought to do is to go send to Peter and he will tell you words whereby you might be saved." And so the result is that finally Peter and his little group come into Cornelius' house and the people are gathered there to hear the word of God, and Peter opens his mouth and he begins to preach. As I've often said to you, he had a long three point sermon with a beautiful introduction. He made one mistake. Unfortunately, he forgot that all the Holy Spirit needs is the gospel, and in the course of

his introduction, because later when he describes this, he said it all happened when I began to speak, well he happened to give the gospel. He said,

"To him give all the prophets witness that whosoever believeth in him shall receive forgiveness of sins. (And we read,) While Peter yet spoke these words, (he was still speaking, he was just getting ready, just getting into his message when suddenly,) the Holy Spirit fell on those who were there. And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

In other words, they are saved. They have received the Holy Spirit. Now, can we keep them from being baptized? Salvation is not by baptism. Baptism follows salvation. It is a work of itself. It is the product of faith, so is circumcision. You can see the apostle's arguing, and I hope you can see mine.

Now, having said that, the apostle goes on to talk about justification being apart from the law, this "For" that begins verse 13 explains further why righteousness came to Abe only by faith. I just wanted to see if you were listening. [Laughter] Now we read in verse 13, "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." Now the apostle argues, it's a simple historical fact that justification came to Abraham not through the law, just think about it for a moment, the law had not been given. It was literally hundreds of years before the law was to be given. But righteousness had already come to Abraham. It's just as if I were to say that something is as evident as Washington did not live under the laws of Texas. You'd say, "Well, of course, Washington didn't live under the laws of Texas. There weren't any laws in Texas when Washington was living."

So consequently Washington didn't live under the laws of Texas. And so, likewise, Abraham was not justified through the works of the law. The law had not yet been given. That's the first thing Paul says. It's clear from history.

But he also says the law was never intended to save. Listen to what he says about the law, "For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void." The law is contrary to the faith. Why is the law contrary to faith? Because the law looks for works, if a man is going to be justified by the law, the law is interested in deeds. What have you done? "The man that doeth them shall live in the law." And only the man who does them shall live by the law. But as Paul says, "If they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void," because faith is an attitude of trust in the Lord God. It's a non-working activity, as he has said. Furthermore, not only does the law annul faith, and not only is it interested in works and deeds, which we cannot perform because we are sinners, the law actually converts sin into transgression and brings wrath.

Now let me illustrate that. Seventy-five years ago, if I had gotten into a mechanical contrivance with four wheels, and if I had gotten into that contrivance and I'd revved it up a little bit and raced down one of the streets of Dallas at one hundred miles an hour, there wouldn't have been any law in the state of Texas, or in the city of Dallas, that could have punished me. In fact, if I ran down the streets at one hundred miles an hour, everybody would run for cover in nineteen hundred and five. There were no laws against speeding one hundred miles an hour. Now the law converted sin. Now that was folly. That would be folly, that would be sin in that sense, but it's a non-transgression because the law against it had not been written.

So what Paul is saying here, and he says in other places, putting it all together. There was sin before the Mosaic Law, but it was not transgression because the law had not been written. Now when the law was written, it turned sin into transgression, disobedience of the law, and in turning sin into transgression it worked wrath. That is, those who disobey the law are now going to hell for breaking the law in addition to

being a child of Adam. So he says, "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."

As you know, in Germany today you can run down the highway today one hundred and twenty miles an hour. And the policemen just look at you like this. There is no law against going one hundred and twenty miles an hour over there. Its folly, but all the Germans are guilty of folly. And you better get out of that inside lane too, if you drive over there. Ride over on the right side, not on the real right, but just the next, out of four lanes. Don't dare get in that third lane or the one on the inside, meteors over there in automobiles come down behind you. They're going one hundred and twenty, one hundred and thirty, one hundred and forty miles an hour. There's no law against speeding over there. And so consequently, there is no transgression, just folly.

Well Paul says, you see, where the law is, the law works wrath, transgression and, ultimately, of course, a disobedience punishable by the law of God. Now he comes to his conclusion in verse 16 and 17. And here we have the rationale of divine grace. "Therefore," he says, "It is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure." What a magnificent statement. If you don't get anything else, get this. You can look at this statement and you can see why God devised the plan of salvation that he devised. He wanted us, not only to be saved, but he wanted us to be sure that we had salvation when we did believe.

Now he says, if you'll look at the last adjective, that "The promise might be sure." So God, in his own thinking, if I may just go through the processes, of course he knows this immediately, he didn't have to reason it out, he doesn't have to reason out anything like we do, he doesn't know anything by discursive reason. He knows it immediately. We have to think through things, and even then we may be wrong. But he wants this promise of salvation to be sure to those who possess it. So he says, "How is it going to be sure?" Why, it can only be sure if it depends on something that I am doing, and not something that they are doing because they will never be able to do it. And so if it's to

be sure to us, it must be on the principle of grace, as a free gift. But now, of course, they must appropriate it. What is the method of appropriation that is suitable to grace? Works? Baptism? Circumcision? No. No. That would transform grace into a work. Faith, faith is a non-working activity. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly."

So if the promise is to be sure, it must be on the principle of grace, and if it's on the principle of grace it must be through faith. That's why he says, verse 16, one of his great texts, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise may be sure." The law is the womb of doubt. Grace is the womb of certainty, safety, and enjoyment. If we're under law, we're always under tension because we cannot do its works. Under grace we have the favor of God. I know that Abraham might have said, "But Lord, suppose I get out of Thy will?" God says, "I will bless thee." Abraham again, "But Lord, suppose my posterity should become idolaters?" "I will bless thee and I will make of Thee a great nation." "Lord, suppose my descendents should crucify the seed when the seed should come?" "I will bless thee and thy seed."

Now we look at it today and we say, we know the story, and we say, "Lord, but suppose Abraham to whom you've given these great promises, suppose he becomes a liar and when he gets down in Egypt, he says, "Sarah is my sister, not my wife." God says, "I will bless him." "But suppose his grandson, Jacob, becomes a crook, and suppose he does the same thing that Abraham did? Suppose he sins constantly?" "I will bless thee." "Suppose that great descendent David should come along, and not only be guilty of adultery, but of murder also?" "I will bless thee." "Suppose these descendents shall crucify the Son of God?" "I will bless thee." "But why Lord?" "Because I'm the God that will through my servant one day write, if you believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself." And then all we can say is, "But Lord, this is grace without merit." Ah yes, that's exactly it, it is unmerited grace.

And my dear friend, if you are sitting in this audience, and if you know the God of Scripture, you know that you are saved by unmerited grace. It is not your faithfulness. It is God's faithfulness in his whole program, from electing grace down through the cross and on through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who works in the lives of individuals, brings home to them their sin, brings them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as Abraham, brings them to the foot of our great Savior, God praising him for the grace that he manifested to unworthy, guilty, unrighteous despicable sinners, which is what we are. Abraham, then, may be the greatest character in the Bible. He's the illustration of grace magnificent. Justification by his example is not by ordinances, or by any other law works. Only, thus, may we have assurance of salvation. And sing, "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

If God in his wonderful grace has spoken to you, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You've been saved by grace. You have no claims on God. In wonderful grace he's reached out to you, the sinner that you are, he's brought you to the knowledge of Christ. And now there wells up within your heart the gratitude that should flow from a man whose been delivered as a bran from the burning and made a man in fellowship with the Lord, God, and who will know, ultimately, the glorious experience of communion with Emmanuel himself who throughout the ages of eternity will be our God. May God speak to your heart. May you see what you really are. May you flee to the cross. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are so grateful to Thee, Lord, for these wonderful truths that are given in holy Scripture. How unworthy we are of grace, unmerited grace, unmerited favor. And we thank Thee that we can be sure because it is by grace through faith. And oh, Father, if there are some here who have not yet believed, bring them to the foot of the cross for the glory of the...

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[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]