

# Made Righteous?

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning.

It's good for us to come together and worship in this way again this week. It's good for us to come together. This evening service will come online just before 6 o'clock tonight.

It's a monthly Gaelic service and once again, Father MacLeod, one of the elders here, will take that service. In the course of the week, as normal, the YF will meet this evening as they've been in the habit of doing on Zoom and on Wednesday evening at half past seven again, we'll meet for the time of prayer on Zoom.

So these, I think, are all the intimations at this point. Let's worship God and let us sing to his praise from Psalm 32 and we'll sing from verses 1 to verse 5 of the psalm.

Down to the end of verse 5, we sing to God's praise.

[ 1 : 32 ] O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile, nor fraud is found therein.

When as I did refrain my speech, and silent was my tongue, my bones then waxed old because, I roar it all day long.

For upon me both day and night, thine hand it heavy lie, so that my moisture turn it is, in summer's drought thereby.

In summer's drought thereby, I thereupon have unto thee my sin acknowledged, and likewise mine iniquity, I have not covered it.

[ 3 : 56 ] I will confess unto the Lord my trespass, said I, and of my sin thou freely didst.

Forgive the iniquity. Let's unite our hearts in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning, we thank you for this new day, and for this new opportunity that you've given to us to come into your presence. And we thank you that we can come echoing the words of the psalmist.

The psalmist. He writes there in the psalm, with an awareness of his sin, and yet a joy in his heart because of your grace. And we come with that same approach.

And we come acknowledging, Lord, that when we seek to hide our sin, when we seek to stay back from you, we feel that heaviness in our spirit.

[ 5 : 15 ] And yet we thank you that we are called to come confessing sin and looking to Christ as Savior. And when we come in that way, we thank you that we have the promise that our sin is not held against us because it is held on the cross against Christ.

We thank you that our sin does not stain our hearts eternally. But when we trust in Jesus, his blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness, all sin.

And we thank you that his finished work makes us righteous as we look in faith to him. So help us, Lord, we pray, in the beginning of this Lord's Day, to have our eyes fixed upon Jesus, to be celebrating the fact that he is the Lord who died in our place and who rose from the dead to justify us and to give us everlasting life.

Give to us, we pray, this day and each day, the joy of your salvation of us. And help us, we pray, to live our lives in thanksgiving for all that you have done for us and are doing for us and promise you will continue eternally to do for us.

And help us, we pray, to take every opportunity that you give to us to share the good news of the gospel, to be ready to tell people of the reason for the hope that is in us.

[ 6 : 38 ] We pray, Lord, that you would help us as we come together in worship. You know each of us as we listen in on telephones, as we watch on screens on our computers and televisions.

You see into our homes, you see into our hearts, you know the things that trouble us, the things that burden us. And we ask that you would meet each one at the point of their need.

We pray for those who are sick at this point. We pray for those who are in our congregation, some in our congregation whom we have been praying for and we continue to hold up in prayer. Those who are receiving treatment, those who are struggling with different kinds of ailments.

We ask, Lord, as we think of them, as they come to our mind's eye, that you would be to them the great physician. We pray for those who are further afield than our own congregation.

Those who are in different parts of the country and different parts of the world. We think especially of Mez McConnell, who we pray for regularly. And we ask that you would be with him as he's contracted coronavirus.

[ 7 : 44 ] We pray, Lord, that you would have your hand of protection and healing on him and over him. We ask, Lord, that you would drive back the virus. That you would give to him health and strength once more.

We thank you for the way that you have used him in the past. And we pray that you would continue to use him in the present, in the work that you call him to do. We pray also for his wife, Miriam, and for the family.

That you would uphold them and strengthen them at this difficult time. We pray for Anna McRae. And we thank you of how she's shared with us of the work of 20 schemes here in the past.

We ask, Lord, that you would continue to use her in this difficult time for your glory in Edinburgh and beyond. We pray, Lord, for those who are struggling with grief at this time also.

We have come in past weeks remembering those who have suffered bereavement. And we pray on for those who suffered bereavement. We think especially of the Reverend Ian Myrdo and his family.

[ 8 : 42 ] With Ian Myrdo having lost his mother in these past days. We ask, Lord, that you would be to him. The God of all comfort. And that he and Alison and Catherine and Ailey and Angus.

That each of them, Lord, would know your hand upon them. And the compassion of God with them at this time. We ask, Lord, that you would be with others who are struggling, Lord, under the lockdown.

And even with the beginnings of a release, we still sense that frustration amongst many. Who want to get out and be amongst friends and who are curtailed.

We still, Lord, would long to be together in this place physically, worshipping you. And yet we are not able to at this time. Give us patience, Lord. Give us perseverance.

Sustain us, Lord, day by day by your grace. And help us, Lord, in all the different things that we have to do. We pray especially for the children. Some of whom find it hard to sleep at this time.

[ 9 : 46 ] Others who are struggling with their schoolwork. We ask, Lord, that they would be looking to you. That they would be trusting in you. We pray for parents as well who struggle to help them with their schoolworks.

And who may feel weary at this point. Lord, we ask that you would be with all of us. And that you would help us. And that we would be looking to you. So hear our prayers.

These are just a few of our needs. But, Lord, we are needy people. We look to you as the God who is able to do far more than we ask or think or imagine.

We ask, Lord, that you would be at work for your glory. We pray especially for conversions at this time. We read on Wednesday evening of Lydia, whose heart was open to the gospel and who responded in faith and who was saved.

And, Lord, we pray that we would see that and that we would hear of that at this time. When things have changed. When so much of what occupied us in the past has been swept away.

[ 10 : 46 ] When we're thinking about the reality of life and death and eternity. We ask, Lord, that you would be working in the hearts of many people. And that we would hear and see of many at this time coming in faith to Jesus.

And receiving the eternal life that he alone is able to give. So be at work, Lord, for your glory in this place. And we ask that you would help us and go before us in the remainder of our time in this day.

And we ask these things together with the forgiveness of all our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls, I hope you are well.

I've got a couple of things to show you today. So I'm just going to go in and get them. Two things here.

The first thing is that. Do you see what that is? Are you getting an okay view there? What's that? That's right, it's a tennis racket.

[ 11 : 54 ] This thing here. What's this? You see that okay? Okay. Well, you know what that is, don't you? It's a golf club.

And if I had one, I would have brought a fishing rod as well. But I don't have a fishing rod, so I didn't bring that. Now, what's all this about? Why am I showing you a tennis racket?

Why am I showing you a golf club? Why would I show you a fishing rod if I had a fishing rod? Well, the reason I'm doing that, and I'm guessing that you know this, is that these are things that we're able to do this week that we weren't able to do last week.

If you want to go to the Scarista and have a round of golf, you couldn't have done that last week, but you can do it this week, if you remember. If you want a game of tennis, you couldn't have done that last week, but we've been told that we can now do that this week.

So if you want to go to Boona and have a game of tennis, I'm sure you can go and have a game of tennis. If you want to go to the locks with John Struthers and have a lesson in how to fish, then I'm sure if we phone him, then he'll help us to know how to fish.

[ 13 : 10 ] If you want to go to somebody else's garden, another family's garden, and maybe have a barbecue or have a cup of tea or have a glass of juice, then I think we can go to each other's gardens, just one family a day, and be with other people.

So this lockdown that has been such a pain for us is starting to lift. We were told that there's the beginnings, the phase one of lockdown being lifted.

So we're able to come a bit closer to each other. We're able to do some things that we weren't able to do before. But the thing is, we're still not able to go near to each other.

No handshakes at the door yet. No hugs. We've got to stay two metres back. That's what the government have told us that we have to do.

Now what has God told us about what we are able to do when we're in lockdown and when we're not in lockdown? Does God say to us at this point, like everybody else is saying to us, you need to stay back.

[ 14 : 25 ] You can come so close, but no closer. Stay back. Well, no, he doesn't say that at all. Not ever. In fact, he says the opposite. God says to us, he says, come near and come nearer and come nearer and come nearer to me.

James chapter 4 verse 8 says, come near to God and he will come near to you. And you know how to come near to God.

We come near to God. We listen to what he's saying when we're reading the Bible. We speak to him when we're praying. And we come near to God when we put our faith in Jesus, who takes our sin away.

That's what separates us from God and who brings us close. Now, one of the reasons that we have to stay away from each other just now, one with each other, we've got to be two meters back, I think, still.

One of the reasons that we have to stay back from each other is because we don't want there to be any risk of the sickness that's been going around, being passed on one person to the next person to the next person that can be spread that way.

[ 15 : 38 ] But the amazing thing about God is that when we come close to him, as he calls us to, he doesn't make us sick.

But he cures the sickness of our heart. He cures our sin. He takes it away. He washes it away.

And he makes us well. He makes everything well in our souls. So boys and girls, let's try and remember that as we go into this week.

Let's remember that although we still have to stay a wee bit far back from each other, we don't have to stay back from God, but he says, come near to me. Let's come near to God and ask that he will work in our hearts, that he'll work in our souls, and that he'll make us well through the blood of Jesus.

And we'll sing about that at the end. Josh will lead us in saying, it's well with my soul. So after Sunday school, maybe you could come back and you could sing that from your hearts.

[ 16 : 48 ] It is well with my soul because I'm trusting in Jesus. And we'll pray. Lord God, we thank you for the good news about Jesus. Although our sin keeps us back from you, we thank you that Jesus came into this world to die so that our sin could be taken away.

And so that we could come near to God. And we ask that the boys and girls, those who are young and those who are middle aged and those who are old, Lord, we pray that each one of us would hear the call of Jesus to come near.

And we thank you that the promise that you've given us is that when we in faith come near to you, you will come near to us. And so we pray that we would know that today, even as we open your word, as we do our Sunday school lessons.

Come near to us, Lord, we pray. Help us to hear your voice and help us to know your presence. And we pray all this in Jesus name and for Jesus sake. Amen.

Well, let's turn now to God's word. We read from Romans chapter four and we read the whole of this chapter. What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather discovered in this matter?

[ 18 : 03 ] If in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Now, when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed is a man whose sin the Lord will never count against him. Is this blessedness only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised? We've been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised or before? It was not after, but before. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

[ 19 : 15 ] So then he is the father of all who believe, but have not been circumcised in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised, who not only are circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

It was not through law that Abraham and his offering received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith is no value and the promise is worthless because law brings wrath.

And where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore, the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham.

He is the father of us all. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations. He is our father in the sight of God in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him. So shall your offspring be. Without weakening his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

[ 20 : 50 ] Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

This is why it was credited to him as righteousness. The words it was credited to him were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness for us who believe in him, who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Amen. And may God give us understanding as we come to this passage.

We'll pray once more. Heavenly Father, we do pray simply for that understanding that we need when we come to your word. The Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to write these things is the one who is our teacher.

And we pray that we would know his teaching, his guiding and illuminating of our minds, his stirring of our hearts, so that the words in this chapter would jump off the page and make an impact in our lives.

[ 22 : 06 ] And we ask that you would you would be working, Lord, for your glory here and in every church that gathers, whether online or through other means.

We pray that you would add your blessing wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. And we pray these things in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen.

And a moment that we pray. In the challenges of homeschooling, parents know what I'm talking about here. Quite a lot of us are struggling in particular with maths.

And one of the things as I've been casting my mind back over past years, one of the things that maths teachers regularly used to say was, show me your workings.

We would have the sheet of sums and we'd have to give the answers, but the maths teachers, they never just wanted the answers. They wanted to see how we got to the answer.

[ 23 : 07 ] They wanted our calculations. I suppose that was a sensible way to teach because, well, one, it catches out the boy who's looked to the desk next to him for the answer and has no clue how they got to it.

And two, it's a helpful approach because it enables the pupil who takes a bit longer to grasp these mathematical facts to actually catch up.

And that's kind of what Paul does here. Just as the maths teacher says, show me your workings. Let me see your workings. Paul, he shows the Romans here his workings of how he got to where he currently was.

Now, if we just take two seconds to look back. In Romans chapter 1 to Romans chapter 3, Paul has taken them from the darkness of how everyone, Jew, Gentile, pagan, religious, everyone is under sin, no one is righteous.

That's the dark place that he took them in Romans chapter 1 to the beginning of chapter 3. And then from chapter 3, verse 21 onwards, he takes them into the light of the gospel of how we can be made righteous, we can be justified, we can be forgiven through faith in Christ.

[ 24 : 32 ] And some likely were rejoicing in this gospel truth. They got it, they understood. They were rejoicing in the fact that there was justification in Jesus through faith.

They were ready for Romans chapter 5, where Paul goes into the blessings of what it means to be justified, the peace and the joy that we're given in Christ. But others, perhaps, were struggling to understand this.

Others, about like the vacant looking boy in the mass class, that was usually me, were going to need a bit longer to figure this out.

And so Paul, like a good teacher, says to them, let's just pause here for a minute. Maybe some of you are finding this hard to understand and to grasp.

So he says to them, let me show you my workings. Let me share to you how I got to the answer of Romans 3, that we can become righteous through faith in Jesus.

[ 25 : 33 ] And Paul here, like a good teacher, he uses an example. He uses an example that they were all very familiar with. He points them to Abraham.

Now, we are supposed to be the commentator, says, every Jew revered Father Abraham. And from Genesis 15, 6, knew that Abraham had been justified before God.

Abraham was justified before God. The Jews knew that. They agreed that. And so Paul, who knew this so well, he asks the question.

And he says, let's think about for a minute, how was Abraham saved? How was Abraham made righteous? We know he was made righteous, but let's think about how he was made righteous.

And then he answers this question of how Abraham was made righteous. And he answers it with three negatives and then one positive. And that gives us our points. The first thing he says is Abraham was made righteous, not by works.

[ 26 : 42 ] Wasn't what Abraham did, not by works. It's verses 1 to 3. What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God.

What does Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. He's quoting there from Genesis 15 and verse 6.

So Paul says, let's think about Abraham. How was Abraham saved? How was he made righteous? Not by works. Now, who was Abraham before God broke into his life?

Well, he was a pagan. Sometimes we forget that. Abraham wasn't born as a holy, godly man. He was a pagan. It's not like Abraham, in the past, before God came to him, had a portfolio of good works that he could trade with God when God came to him.

He was living in a pagan culture. He was part of a pagan culture. He, with that culture, was very much opposed to God. He was in Romans 1 territory. But then God came to him.

[ 27 : 56 ] And God made him this promise in Genesis 15, 6, that he would bless him with many children. And Abraham, he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

So what Paul is saying here is that faith in God was the key that unlocked the door to righteousness that came from God.

And that righteousness, says Paul, it wasn't by works. It wasn't earned. It was a gift. Verse 4. Now, when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

However, to the man who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. And again, you can see the logic here.

If you think about it this way. Imagine, imagine you had been taken on for a day to work on a building site. And you had hard labour on that building site.

[ 29 : 07 ] You do 12 hours of a shift. You sweat. You graft. You work your way through that shift. And you've been told what your early rate is. And you get to the end of the shift and you go to the foreman who's going to give you your wages.

And the foreman says to you, as you sit there in your shirt that's dripping with sweat from all the work that you've done the day. The foreman says to you, here's a gift for you.

I hope you appreciate it. And then he gives you your hourly rate times the hours that you've done. And he says, here's a gift for you. I hope you appreciate it. Now, if that foreman said that to you, you would say indignantly to him, that's no gift.

Don't give me my wage packet and call it a gift. That's not a gift. That's what I'm due. That's what I've grafted over. That's my hard earned wage that you're obligated, you're obliged to give me.

And what Abraham received, says Paul, it was no wage. He hadn't worked for it. It was a gift. It was a token of God's grace.

[ 30 : 15 ] He didn't deserve it. He hadn't earned it. But God freely gave it. And then Paul, he moves. In order to drive this point home, Paul says to them, let's take another example.

We've thought about Abraham. Let's think for a minute about King David. And then in verse 6, he speaks. And he says, David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

Then he quotes in verses 7 and 8 from Psalm 32. Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

Now, where does that quote come from? It comes from Psalm 32. What is Psalm 32? Well, we sang it and we can see that it's a psalm of confession. What was going on in David's life?

Well, he didn't have anything to boast about. He has committed adultery with Bathsheba. He has murdered her husband. He is guilty.

[ 31 : 22 ] He knows his sin. He knows his demerit. And he confesses it in this psalm. He knows that he deserves to be punished. But instead, God freely and graciously blesses him with forgiveness and justification.

This is a psalm where David, he rejoices in that. It's a psalm where we see so powerfully the grace of God. So, Packer, in his book, Knowing God, says, The grace of God is love freely shown towards guilty sinners.

Contrary to their merit, and indeed in defiance of their demerit, it is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and who have no reason to expect anything but severity.

So, Paul is saying here to the congregation in Rome, especially to the Jews within it, Since you hold Abraham and David in such high esteem, do what they did.

Have faith in God. Because it's faith that saved them. It's faith that made them righteous. Faith, not works. And that's a truth that not only was to be impressed upon them, that's a truth that must be impressed upon you and I.

[ 32 : 57 ] That's what saves us. Faith. Not works. And it's a gift from God. It's not a wage that we earn.

The only wages that we are due is death, because we are all sinners. And Paul will come to that in Romans chapter 6. But the gift of God, for those who will bow low enough to receive it, is salvation, it's righteousness, through faith in Jesus.

So, how are we made righteous? Asks Paul. And he answers, first of all, not by works, but by faith in Christ. Christ. The second thing he says in this chapter is, we're made righteous not by religious signs.

Not by religious signs. Circumcision is the word that keeps on being mentioned here. And Paul says, you're not made righteous by these religious signs and markings on you.

on you. I remember one day being in my study quite a number of years ago before I ever came here. And the phone rang.

[ 34 : 18 ] I answered it. There was a voice on the phone that I didn't recognize. A lady who I'd never met before or spoken to before. And she said to me, quite curtly, I'd like to book you for a baptism, for a Christian.

And I'd like to just request that it be a very short service. And I have a quaint little chapel over in Dorney Book. She says, I have the caterers ready.

Family and friends have been invited for the after party. You can come if you must. I just need a minister to do the christening thing. And I could sense trouble as this conversation began.

I didn't want to have trouble on the phone. So I said to her, well, come and see me. Nice for you to phone. Come and see me and let's have a conversation.

Let's have a discussion about what baptism actually is and what the vows mean. And let's come to a decision as we open up the Bible and look at what this is. Let's come to a decision about whether this is the right thing to do.



[ 35 : 29 ] And then there was a long silence. There was a kind of heavy pause. And then she sighed and said, I'm far too busy for that. Just trying to organize the christening.

I said, well, I'm sorry. It won't be possible to go ahead with this if you're not willing to come and speak about what it is that you want to do. And her response was absolute rage.

She ranted and she raved and she finished off the conversation before she slammed down the phone by saying, you are keeping my granddaughter out of heaven. Now, she had some superstitious belief that you could be saved through religious signs like baptism.

And that was going on in Rome. The Jews were circumcised. They were marked with that religious sign of the covenant, a sign that was first given to Abraham.

And they believed that that sign was enough to save them and make them righteous. I quoted the rabbi who was one of Paul's contemporaries, one of Saul the Pharisees' contemporaries a couple of weeks ago.

[ 36 : 43 ] He said, I quote, circumcision saves you from hell. Said this rabbi, not Paul. Abraham sits at the gates of hell and no circumcised Jew is allowed to pass him.

Now, that was a teaching that was totally unbiblical. It was not from God. And Paul was clearly challenging that. And he was teaching them that it wasn't true.

Circumcision was not enough to save. Circumcision was not enough to get you a place in heaven and to cause you to avoid hell. And so, now he shows them his workings again.

In verse 9 to 12, you can see the detail of Paul's workings as he teaches them that being made righteous is not something that comes by religious sign.

and I'm watching my time here so you can read through these verses from 9 to verse 12. But just to summarize this argument, it's an incredibly simple argument and powerful argument and to summarize it, Paul, he asks the question, was Abraham saved?

[ 37 : 53 ] Was he made righteous before he was circumcised or after he was circumcised? Verse 10. And the answer was, he was made righteous.

He was declared righteous by God before he was circumcised. Actually, 14 years before he was circumcised. Commentator Kofi says, Abraham was not circumcised until 14 years after he had responded in faith to God's promise.

He was counted as righteous in God's sight on the grounds of his faith, not of his circumcision. His circumcision was an external sign of an inner faith that predated the ceremony of Genesis 17.

So Paul says to these circumcised Jews, circumcision did not save him. Abraham was not saved by the religious sign.

Faith in God saved him and the circumcision, the sign, was a sign of that salvation. It was a seal of it. The teaching for us in application is quite clear.

[ 39 : 06 ] We are not saved by religious signs. Being sprinkled with water as a child will not save us. Being fully immersed in water as an adult will not save us.

Taking bread and wine into our mouths will not save us. Having our name on a communion roll will not save us.

We are not saved by religious signs. We are not made righteous with God through these religious signs. They simply point us to the righteousness of God that is offered to us through faith in Jesus.

We see signs everywhere. There is a sign for Luskentire Beach at the road end as you approach Luskentire.

Now, think about how foolish it would be for us to head in the direction of Luskentire and to take our deck chair out and our picnic basket out and to sit for the day underneath the Luskentire Beach sign when there is an amazing beach just a mile and a half beyond the road where the sign is pointing to.

[ 40 : 22 ] And how foolish it would be for us not to follow the signs that God has given us signs that point us to the salvation to the righteousness that is offered to those who come in faith to Jesus.

So how was Abraham made righteous asks Paul. not by works and not by the religious sign that was on his body.

And finally here in terms of the negative he says not by the law. Verse 13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

For if those who live by law are heirs faith has no value and the promise is worthless because law brings wrath where there is no law there is no transgression.

Again just to try and simplify the argument that Paul makes he just adopts the same logic in this point as he did in the last one. In point number two he says Abraham couldn't be saved by the sign of circumcision because the sign came 14 years after he was declared righteous with God by faith.

[ 41 : 48 ] And now in point three here Paul says Abraham couldn't be saved by the law because the law was given through Moses 430 years after the time that Abraham was declared righteous through faith.

And the argument is really simple but so clear. Abraham was saved he was made righteous before the law was given 400 years plus before the law was given.

So he couldn't be saved by keeping the law when he didn't even know about the law. And for us we can't be saved by keeping God's law that the law doesn't bring salvation to us it brings wrath verse 15 the law as I said last week it's not a ladder that we climb in order to become righteous it's a mirror that shows us that we are not righteous so that we will look in faith to Jesus who is able to save us and who kept the law perfectly.

So Paul says to those who are struggling to grasp this good news about the righteousness of God through faith he says there's my workings here's some of the detail for you to look through this is how I got to the answer that Abraham was made righteous through faith not through the law not through religious signs not through works but through faith.

you can see him just having that conversation with the Jews he says to them you're working hard as was I but can't you see works will not make you righteous he says to him you place such value and worth on the sign of circumcision he says to him I have that sign too but that sign did not make me righteous he says you pride yourself on living by the letter of the law but let's be honest we can't keep the law just as Abraham couldn't keep the law and David couldn't keep the law and so the law doesn't make us righteous so he says let's go back over now again how we can be made righteous let's think about how we can be saved let's think about the positive message of the gospel we've moved from the negative we can't be saved by works we can't be saved by signs we can't be saved by law now he says let's think about how we can be saved that takes us to our final point he says we can be saved we can be made righteous by faith therefore verse 16 the promise comes by faith and he said it before he's singing again he will come back to this point time and time again our righteousness with God our eternal salvation our security comes by faith faith but that statement before we finish it needs to be unpacked a bit more faith is the way that righteousness is delivered but it's not faith itself that saves us it's the one in whom our faith is located that saves us for example we from time to time will have the

[ 45 : 39 ] Jehovah's witnesses knocking at the door now they are people of faith but because they don't believe that Jesus is God because they don't believe that the cross of Jesus is the means through which we can be saved they according to what the Bible teaches will not be declared righteous they have faith but their faith is misplaced their faith bypasses the cross of Christ and so for that reason in spite of their faith they will not be declared righteous so having faith is not enough our faith must be in the right place I can have just a small amount of faith in a very strong chair and that chair will hold me even though my faith is weak or I can have a huge amount of faith in a rickety old deck chair and when I sit in it the whole thing collapses and I'm on my back side see the important thing is not having a faith it's having saving faith and so

Paul finishes by describing the nature the components the elements of saving faith let me give you three G's just to finish off the first thing he says about this faith that makes us righteous that saves us is that it's by grace therefore the promise comes by faith verse 16 so that it may be by grace now Paul has already implied this in the phrase that he's used three times verse 3 verse 9 verse 22 he keeps underlining this phrase that he's taken from Genesis Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness verse 9 Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness verse 22 that is why it was credited to him as righteousness now if you've got an ESV or an AV the word might be a different word it might be imputed it might be reckoned it might be counted but they're all accounting terms technically we're speed the commentator says these words mean the same thing to put into a person's account justification means righteousness imputed put into our account and gives us a right standing before God remember on one occasion when the girls were on a school trip

Rose and Grace and Grace and Anna and they took phones with them on the trip and they had a little bit of credit in the phones when they went away but predictably and very quickly they ran out of credit and so I got a phone call from one of them to say we've got hardly any credit left in our phones what do we do so what did I do well I put the payment details in from my card paid the price and it was credited to their to their account they didn't pay for it they just asked me for more credit and I paid for it and it went into their account and that's what God has done for us on the cross the great exchange the greatest transaction ever was effective our sin was transferred it was charged to Jesus account our sin went from us to him and his righteousness his perfect righteousness that saves us was credited to our account he paid the price of our salvation with his own blood and so now if we want to be made righteous we don't pay for it we don't work for it but we in faith ask for it and God gives it to us by grace what is grace

I've said it so many times let me say it again grace is God's riches at Christ's expense in terms of Romans 4 we could put it this way what is faith it's God's righteousness at Christ's expense where was Christ expended on the cross see grace always takes us back to the cross it always takes us back to Jesus so the faith that saves it focuses on Christ it focuses on his cross and the grace that flows to us through his shed blood so we're saved by faith but it's a faith that comes by grace through Christ second thing here as we move to the conclusion it's guaranteed verse 16 and verse 17 therefore the promise comes by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all

Abraham's offspring not only those who are of the law the Jews but also those who are of the faith of Abraham it's us so Paul goes on here and this is one of the most glorious things we're being made right with God receiving forgiveness of our sin of our sin receiving spiritual life for those who were dead it's not some pie in the sky hope it's guaranteed it's the sure and certain hope for all those every nation Jew Gentile whoever has faith in Jesus and this righteousness that is promised is guaranteed it's not a performance dependent thing it's not something that we can lose if we fall and if we fail it's guaranteed for all those who have faith in Christ because

[ 52 : 05 ] Jesus has done everything that was necessary for us to gain this and he's done it on the cross in the past he died for our sin he shouted out remember on the cross it is finished done it it's guaranteed there's nothing uncertain there's nothing about our salvation that's conditional in us Jesus has done it all Jonathan Edwards said you contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary and I meet so many people it's sad but I do I meet so many people who say to me with huge anxiety I hope I'm a Christian I want to be a Christian I hope I'm a Christian I'm trying to be a Christian I hope my sins are forgiven I hope

I have a place in heaven Paul is saying here the good news of the gospel is that forgiveness of sin righteousness with God a place in heaven is guaranteed to all those who have faith in Jesus you can have it now you have the promise the guarantee of it the second that you believe in Jesus you could have come into this service this morning as someone who is lost anxious uncertain about time and eternity and yet in one split second as you lift your eyes from yourself and from everyone around you and you focus on Christ and the cross the moment that we put our faith in him and what he has done is the moment that for us righteousness with God and salvation is guaranteed we have nothing to fear as the hymn goes no guilt in life no fear in death this is the power of

Christ in me to this faith that saves says Paul it's by grace it's guaranteed not fragile it's not reversible it's guaranteed and finally it's through God's word verse 20 yet he Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised that is why this is why it was credited to him as righteousness see Abraham's faith came not from a feeling in his tummy but Abraham's faith came by fixing his eye on the word of God Abraham's faith came through holding fast to the word of

God it was grounded in the word of God God promised him children the promise to Abraham on first hearing must have seemed far fetched must have seemed impossible how could two old people Sarah who is 90 years old Abraham's wife and Baran and Abraham who is 100 years old how could they have a son their bodies were as good as dead in terms of childbearing but God promised God gave them his word and Abraham believed it and God did it and Paul reminds us as we finish that God has made us a promise too verse 23 these words it was credited to him were written not for him alone but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness for us who believe in him who raised

Jesus our Lord from the dead he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification this is for us and saving faith for you and for I it's not located in our feelings it's not something that is governed by our circumstances but it is it's through taking hold of God's word you want to be made right with with God you want to be saved says Paul you need to believe in what God has said in his word and what has he said to us well he said to us that Jesus is Lord he is God the son he said to us that Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and he said to us that

[ 57 : 34 ] Jesus was raised to life for our justification we're speaking the fact that Jesus died proves we were sins the fact that God raised them from the dead proves we have been justified by his blood this is evidence that justification is a matter of resurrection power and not feeble human effort not by works are we made righteous not by religious science are we made righteous not by the law are we made righteous but by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone are we saved are we made righteous are we made well in our souls we'll finish by singing together the words of that great hymn where we thank God for all that he has done to make it well within our souls he need a one

When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea bills roll, whatever my lot you have told me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, if trial should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ hath regarded my helpless estate and has shed his own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

[ 60 : 46 ] I sing, O the bliss of his glorious heart, my sin not in part but the whole.

His name turned across and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.

It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live, if children of our body should come.

No pen shall be mine, for in death as in life, you will whisper your peace to my soul.

[ 62 : 07 ] It is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

But Lord, it's for you, for your coming be great.

The sky, not the grave, is our goal. No tram, my angel, O voice of the Lord, blessed hope, blessed rest for my soul.

It is well with my soul.

It is well, it is well with my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.

[ 63 : 23 ] Amen. Amen. And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forevermore.

Amen. Thank you.