

Romans 4 - The Confidence of Abraham

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How's your faith doing? It's a very important question. It's a question that the Biblical writers were hugely consumed with. How's your faith? Sometimes we forget as Christians that what it means to be a Christian or what being a Christian is all about is faith. It's putting your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Do you know that's what makes you a Christian? So many times, people will say to me, we'll be talking about some loved one and I'll say, well, are they a believer? Oh yeah. They prayed to receive the Lord.

Do you know that praying doesn't make you a Christian? Even praying the sinner's prayer doesn't necessarily make you a Christian. It's very possible to pray a prayer and not mingle it with faith. Very possible. Just because somebody reads the Bible, that doesn't make you a believer. Just because somebody comes to church, that doesn't make you a Christian.

What is a Christian? A Christian is someone who has put their faith in Christ and is resting in what He did on the cross. And when I mean resting, that's exactly what I'm saying. Resting. Nothing else needs to be done. I loved how in our worship time today, we sang over and over again, we're trusting in Christ alone and He's it. He's all I need. We say that we sing it, but do we mean it? Is He all you need? And are you resting in what Jesus did for you on the cross? Or are you working? Are you working to try to accomplish something more because there's a feeling of lack?

That's a very, very important thing for us to be thinking about today as we get into Romans chapter 4. And actually, what I'm going to do is I'm going to set up the chapter for you if I could just for a moment, may I? This chapter is going to begin, I'm going to begin by showing you a question that is asked in the Book of Job. Let me show you on the screen. It is from Job chapter 9 and it says, and this is Job himself asking the question,

Job 9:2 (ESV)

...how can a man be righteous before God?

...how can a man be righteous before God?

Now, this is a huge question that just takes up our entire study today so let me define once again what it means to be righteous with God. It means to be in right standing with God. It means to be acceptable to God. It means to be forgiven by God. How can a man or woman be acceptable to God? Forgiven. How can a person be in right standing or how here about this one? Approved. What do you think of that? How can a person be approved by God? It's a big question.

Now, Romans chapter 4 is the continuation of Paul's argument to answer that very question that Job answered so many, or asked rather, so many years before. And what he's been saying here in, you know what, I should probably turn to it myself. What he's been saying here in our study of Romans up to this point is that it is not, being right with God, is not the result of our performance of good works according to the law, but it is by faith.

Some of you Christians were on a performance track with God and you're working very hard to try to be good enough for God to love you, to notice you, and to accept you. And I want you to know. That that's never going to work. And Paul is going to emphasize that very thing in our study of Romans 4 and what he's going to do, and I'm just, again, I'm laying this out ahead of time just to tell you what we're going to talk about, what he's going to say, and then we're going to, we're going to look at it verse by verse.

And then we're going to summarize it, but Paul is going to bolster his argument by going to use Abraham as an example, who is the father of the Jews. And most of you know that from studying the Bible. Some of you might be brand new in the Word, and this might be a new thing to you, but Abraham is really considered to be the very first Jew and he is the father of the Jewish race. And those of you who know that probably also know that it was through Abraham that God gave to Israel, the covenant sign of circumcision.

Now, He made a covenant with Abraham, said He was going to bless him in his descendants, and then He gave him a sign or a symbol, if you will, of that covenant, and that sign was circumcision. Wouldn't have been my choice for a sign, but it was what God chose, gave him circumcision. And circumcision was precious to the Jews. It was huge to them. In fact, you might know from reading

the Scriptures that the Jews called themselves, the circumcision. That's what they literally referred to themselves as. We are, they said, the circumcision.

And because of that, because they had received circumcision, and they applied circumcision to every male child on the eighth day of their life, the Jews believed they were righteous before God because they were the circumcision. We've received the sign of the covenant that was given to Abraham and God said, Abraham was a righteous man and then He gave him circumcision and he is our father, and we have received circumcision and therefore we are righteous. Do you get the line of thinking here? Abraham was declared righteous. He was given circumcision.

We have been circumcised. We are righteous as well. This is the stuff Jesus came up against during his time on earth in the flesh, and the Jews believed very strongly that their righteousness was a standing they had before God based on circumcision. That's an important thing for you to know. And again, what Paul's going to do in this chapter, he's going to show that God did declare Abraham to be a righteous man or in right standing with God, but Paul is going to bring out that Abraham was declared that before he was circumcised.

In other words, God called Abraham a righteous man according to his faith, and then 14 years later gave him the covenant sign of circumcision. This is all, this is the stuff that Paul's going to go through in this chapter, so, let's get into it here beginning in verse 1. Oh, wait, let's pray.

Father God, fill our hearts with You, fill our hearts with understanding, fill our hearts with wisdom. Lord, we sometimes forget just to pause for a moment before we get into the Word and just say, Lord, speak to me through Your Holy Spirit. Teach me God with wisdom and grace and understanding. We ask these things in Jesus name, amen.

Verse 1. Here we go there. *“What then shall we say (Paul asks) was gained by Abraham, (or what benefit is there to Abraham) our forefather according to the flesh? (verse 2) For if Abraham was justified by works, (well then) he has something to boast about, but not before God.” (ESV)*

Remember, justified means essentially, it's another word for forgiven. It means just as if you had never sinned. He says if, if, if Abraham was justified by his works well then he had something to boast about. If Abraham was justified by something he did, then he could say, look what I did and God justified me, forgave me, acquitted me because I am a righteous man by what I did. But that's not what happened. He goes on.

Verse 3 says well, “ *For what does the Scripture say?* (He's quoting Genesis here) “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.*”

It doesn't say Abraham did all kinds of good things and God credited or counted that to him as righteousness. It doesn't say that, does it? What does it say? It says, “*Abraham believed God.*” He put his faith in God and God credited or counted that to him as righteousness. Now, again, many of the Jewish teachers in Paul's day believed that Abraham was just justified by his works. By keeping the Law.

And you might say, well, that sounds a little crazy. Didn't Abraham come before the Law? Yeah. Abraham was the beginning of the Jewish race. Do you know the Law didn't come until about 600 years later? In fact, over 600 years. But yet the Jews still believed Abraham kept the Law. They believe he kept it by an intuitive sort of a way or in anticipation of the Law. He kept the Law and therefore he was declared to be righteous in the eyes of God.

But Paul is quoting this passage from Genesis to show that Abraham's righteous standing occurred before he received the covenant sign of circumcision. All right, it might help a little bit. We're talking about this past event, but it might help to get the backstory of this a little bit. So, let's take a look at Genesis chapter 15 on the screen. Here we go. Beginning in verse 1, it says,

Genesis 15:1-6 (ESV)

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.”

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: (He wasn't even renamed Abraham at this time) “Fear not, Abram, (God says to him) I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, (I don't have any children) and a member of my household will be my heir.” ⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.”

Genesis 15:1-6 (ESV)

And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (In other words, they will be just as uncountable. And look what it says here at the end of the passage) And he believed the LORD, (And that's what Paul is quoting in Romans 4. And what does it say?) and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Now in case you didn't catch it. In that passage we just read, there are three words that ought to jump off the page or the screen or whatever you're reading it at. And they are these 3 words, believed, counted and righteousness.

- **BELIEVED**
- **COUNTED**
- **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

First of all, it says, "*Abraham believed the LORD.*" Do you know that the Hebrew word for believe in its verb form means to be certain? Okay. It literally carries the idea of leaning on something with your whole weight. I would demonstrate by leaning on this, but this isn't very sturdy. But the whole idea of believe, in the Hebrew means you can lean on it with your whole weight. You can put your whole weight on it. It's not going to give away. Isn't that interesting?

In Proverbs, we're told to not lean on something. Remember what it is? "*Lean not on your own understanding,*" but what can you lean on? You can lean on God. By faith you can believe and leave.

Here's my question to you. Can you lean on your faith? Can you lean on God with your faith? Is your faith able to lean on God with your whole weight? That's a good question. Next, it says, counted. He counted. Your Bible may have had a different word there.

Your Bible may say credited, which is an interesting accounting term, is it not? To receive credit for something. It is something that is added to the positive side

of your ledger. And it says, God credited or counted righteousness to Abraham according to his faith. In fact, the word counted or credited literally means to put to one's account. Okay. He was credited righteousness. And then the last word is the actual credit that he received that jumps off the page.

- **BELIEVED**
- **COUNTED**
- **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

And that is the word righteousness. And again, it means right standing with God. And we all want to have right standing with God. Don't you? I want to be in rights. I do not want to be opposed to God. I don't want my life to be lived in opposition or in, where God and I are at odds. That's a terrible way to live. I want to be in a right relationship with Him. It's what we all want, but none of us have. Not one of us. Not one of us in this room in and of ourselves is in right standing with God. It's something that is given to us, but it is not something we possess on our own.

We want it, but we can't have it unless we look to Him and lean upon Him with our whole weight and trust that our righteousness is through Him. It doesn't mean that we don't try to be righteous. But the history of the Christian church is just one big, failed example of people trying to live good Christian lives apart from God I mean. If I had a dollar for every time somebody said to me, I'm just trying to live a good life, I would be a wealthy man. It's just, it comes off people's lips so easily.

I'm trying to live a good life. Why? The bottom line, and there are okay reasons to want to live in a way that's pleasing to God. But unfortunately, a lot of people are trying to live that way to be made acceptable to God. They want God to accept them. They want to be in right relationship with Him and they're like, they treat God like they do some other authority person in their life. I just don't want to cross wires with God. I want to live in a way that I just don't cross wires with God and get on His bad side because you don't want to be on God's bad side. You want to be on God's good side.

So, I'm going to try to live a good life and we're trying to be made acceptable to Him through our good works and our lives and it doesn't work because we can't do it. And in fact, do you remember what Isaiah wrote in the 64th chapter of Isaiah? It's a great passage. He says that,

Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)

All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts, are like filthy rags....

All of us have become like one who is unclean (and unclean in a Biblical sense means unacceptable, right?) *and* (what) *all our* (best) *righteous acts, are* (what are they to God? How does he view them? Well they're) *like filthy rags...*

You guys probably know that the term filthy rags literally refers to a menstrual cloth because any bleeding of an individual would render them instantly unclean, meaning unacceptable before God. And they had to go through this washing process and this period of time before they could once again enter into the presence of God and worship in His presence.

What Isaiah is saying here is that we're all unclean and the best that you can do, the best that you can do as it relates to righteous living in comparison to God's holiness, it's filthy rags.

I'm not saying that God doesn't appreciate the things that you do, okay. I'm saying that by comparison with His holiness. Remember those commercials years ago? Some of you might not. I remember growing up seeing these commercials with, for Tide or something like that. And they would take a sock that was washed in brand X and then a sock that was washed in Tide and look at the difference. And they'd sit them side by side. And this one that was washed in Tide was practically glowing. It was so clean. And the other one was like, Oh, it's dirty and dingy. It didn't get it clean. You need to buy Tide and so forth and so on, and all the weird things that went along with that to try to get you to spend your money. The point is they know in commercials that when you compare things with things, it shows the difference. And what Paul is saying is that when you compare our righteousness with God's holiness, yeah, yikes. The difference is our best, the best that we can do is filthiness before God.

He goes on in verse 4. Look with me in your Bible. He says, “*Now to the one who works, (that’s the key) his wages are not counted as a gift but (they’re rather) as his due.*”

Right? When you work for your boss some of you even punch a clock or write down your timecard on a timecard, your hours or whatever. Does your boss or does your, the company you work for, give you that money as a gift? No, of course not. You earned it. It says right there on the timecard, you worked for that money. That's what Paul's saying first, okay? That when you work, your wages are given you as an obligation, not as a gift.

Verse 5. *“And to the one who does not work but (rather) believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted (or again, credited) as righteousness,”*

Again, Paul makes that point and he's going to make it several times in this study that faith is what God recognizes for righteousness, not works. Okay? But did you notice in that verse, who God justifies? Who does God justify? I think you're supposed to say whom does God justify to be completely grammatically correct.

Look at verse 5 again. It says, *“And to the one who does not work but rather believes in him who justifies the ungodly.”*

Wow! Guys, did you know that God justifies the ungodly? He doesn't justify the good. He justifies the ungodly. Remember, justify means, just as if I'd never sinned. He acquits the ungodly.

Why is it people don't want to come to church usually when they've been living a life they know they shouldn't be living? What do they tell you? You've invited people to church. What do they say to you? Well, my life just really isn't up to where it should be. And when I get my life going and when I get my life on a better track, I'll start coming to church.

They've missed the whole point. They've missed the whole point of why we're even here. We're here because we're all ungodly. And that includes all of us, myself included. We're here because He justifies and forgives the ungodly. Do you remember Jesus used to get criticized about this? They would say, Oh, He eats with sinners, right? I love Jesus' response to that criticism. He says, guys, it's the sick who need a doctor, not those who are well. Of course, I'm going to go hang out with the sinners.

That's what I do. God justifies the ungodly. He forgives the ungodly when they put their faith in Him. Right? We have this weird, twisted human idea that I've got to fix my life, I've got to make it better and then God will accept me. That's backwards. You can't fix your life. You can't fix your marriage. You can't fix your home. You can't fix your relationships, and you cannot be acceptable before God based on doing good things. You need to trust in Him.

Believe that what He did for you on the cross was for you and you will be forgiven. You will be justified. Wow. Isn't that crazy? Forgiveness is for sinful people like me and you. Remember what Paul said about sinners? He says, here's a true saying, Jesus came to save sinners of whom I am the worst. He just

came. I'm the worst one of all, and He came to die for us, and I'm so glad that He did because I needed it more than any of you.

That was Paul's attitude, and that wasn't false humility. That was a man who had looked square into the face of the revelation of God's holiness and saw himself as he was. He knew himself to be a sinner, and he knew God to be a Savior of sinners. Wonderful thing. Next time the enemy comes to hammer you about the life you've lived and the things, the mistakes you've made. And doesn't he love to do that? Don't you remember the Scripture says that he is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses people to themselves. He accuses people to other people. He accuses people to God, and he accuses God to people.

He comes to accuse, and he said he likes to come and just point the finger at you when you've messed up and go, yeah, look now what your life is like you big self-righteous nobody. Yeah, you like to call yourself a Christian. Look what you just did. Whoo, aren't people going to talk now? That's the time you start standing on the promises of God.

Romans 4:5 (ESV)

To the one who believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...

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You write that down and you start quoting it in the face of all that accusation, and all of that self-condemnation that the enemy wants to lay upon you to say, there's no possible way God's ever going to love someone like you. You just come back and say, you know what my Bible says to the one who believes, God justifies the ungodly. And yeah, I may be in the ungodly category, but I'm also in the justified category because of God's love. And because I believe. I believe that what Jesus did for me is real.

Look at verse 6. Verse 6 in your Bible, *“just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:*
⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Did you notice three times David makes it very clear that the person he's pronouncing a blessed condition about is a sinner. In fact, he calls him a lawless person, right? But what happened? This lawless sinner put his faith in Jesus, and now he has this blessed condition where his sins are now forgiven, right? I just

love those kinds of passages because they remind us that Jesus came to die for sinners.

And then Paul asked this question in verse 9. *“Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, (meaning the Jews?) or (is it) also for the uncircumcised? (or the Gentiles?) For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.”*

Yeah, we read that in Genesis chapter 15. Well, how then was it counted to him? Was it before or was it after he'd been circumcised? It wasn't after, it was before. Again, Paul is bringing out the point that I told you at the beginning we were going to look at, and that is that Paul is saying, you Jews who believe that the covenant sign of circumcision is your righteousness, let me ask you a question. When did God give him, or when did God declare him to be righteous in His sight?

Was it before or after he was circumcised? It was before. So why are you putting all this focus on circumcision as your righteousness when He declared him to be righteous before he was circumcised? Abraham didn't have to get circumcised first. It was, there was, as I said, a 14-year gap between the declaration. Abraham, you're a righteous man. You're in right standing with God. And then came circumcision so, he reiterates here.

Verse 11. *“He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had (Past tense. Already been given) by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of (The Jews? No, the father of) all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised (the Jews) who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”*

Guess what? Paul tells us here that Abraham is not just the father of the Jews. He's the father of all who have faith and put their faith. If somebody ever asks you, are you a child of Abraham? You can say, Yes, I am. They'll say, oh, really? So you're Jewish? No, not by blood, but spiritually I'm a child of Abraham. And if they say, Well, what's that all about?

You have a wonderful opportunity to begin to share that Abraham is the father of those who put their faith in God and who believe Him at His word. And I am one of those. I put my faith in God, I believe Him at His word, and now I'm a child of Abraham, right? And in fact, this is the exact same conclusion. Paul

talks about this in some of his other letters. Let me just give you, show you just one example from the Book of Galatians chapter 3. He says,

Galatians 3:6-7 (ESV)

just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Who are the sons of Abraham? Those of faith. Is that you today? Do you have your faith in God? Then you're a child of Abraham. Well, how can that be?

Verse 13. Look with me there, *“For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through (how?) the righteousness of faith. (Verse 14) ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents (which means the followers) of the law who are to be the heirs, (well then) faith is (ridiculous. It's) null and the promise is void. (Why?) ¹⁵ For the law (just) brings wrath, (this is what he goes on to say in verse 15. For the law brings wrath) but where there is no law there is no transgression.”*

That's simply a statement that means, in order to, the word transgression means to violate a known barrier, or rule. In other words, if I said to my child, don't go outside until I go with you and they go outside anyway, that's a transgression because I gave them a command. But what Paul is saying here, where there's no command given there's no transgression. But the point is where there is a command, transgressions take place and death results. The Law brings wrath, and we die. The Law kills. Okay?

He says in verse 16. *“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace (which is a free gift) and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent (or follower) of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,”*

By the way, can you tell here, is Paul against people trying to follow the Law or be an adherent of the Law? Is he against that? No! There's nothing wrong with the Law. The Law is good. It's holy, it's righteous, it's pure. Paul doesn't have any problem with people trying to live according to the Law.

You know what he has a problem with? People who try to be righteous according to the Law. People who try to be acceptable to God according to the Law, he says, that doesn't work.

You want to live according to the Law? Knock yourself out. But if you're trying to live in such a way that you're going to please God by your works according to the Law, that's a problem. Because that's not how acceptance happens. It happens through faith. When we believe, okay?

He says in verse 17, *“as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”*

Again, Abraham is our father because we believe, and we've put our faith. And so we're sons and daughters of Abraham by faith. And then Paul has some things to say about Abraham's faith. Let's do these quickly.

Verse 18. It says, *“In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (That's a nice thing to say) (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.”*

Stop there for just a moment. What is Paul saying? He's saying that Abraham had to grapple with what he knew intellectually and what he knew experientially against faith. Okay? In other words, we do the same thing.

We know what we know, and we know what we've experienced and then God comes along and makes a promise, and we go, eh, I don't know. And in Abraham's case, he had to grapple with his intelligence that knew that, listen, God promised me a child through Sarah, but the baby factory has long since shut down. She has passed the point of childbearing years. Not only that, but when she was of childbearing age, she didn't conceive. Ever. So this is what he knows.

He also knows his own body is almost a 100 years old. What are you thinking God? You're promising me children coming from me and my wife and we're both old, and this is contrary to nature. Isn't this interesting? He's saying here that in hope, he believed against hope, meaning that everything he knew, everything he experienced said, that's not going to happen. It's just plain not going to happen. There's no way you and Sarah are going to get pregnant. Just drop it.

That's what the intellect says, right? But God says it will happen. And He takes him outside and says, look at the stars, Abe. Can you count them? No, it's too many. Right. It's exactly how your children are going to be too many to count.

Now, what are you going to do? You're going to believe your intellect. You're going to believe your experience? Or are you going to believe God?

That's the question. And that's the thing. Don't we all face that from time to time on almost on a daily basis? People have come to me so many times when I talk about forgiveness in Jesus and they say, but what if I don't feel forgiven? And my response is always, what does that have to do with anything? You don't feel forgiven, so what? Are you going to believe your feelings or are you going to believe the Word of God?

God says, in fact, He promises if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Now, do you believe it? Well, on good days, and then there's those bad days where I don't necessarily feel very forgiven. That's your intellect jumping into the forefront and saying, believe me, believe me. Here look at me, listen to me, believe what I'm saying. And you and I have to say, no, I'm not going to believe that. I'm going to believe God.

I'm going to believe that He promised that if I confess my sins, He promised me that because of what Jesus did on the cross, my sins can be completely taken care of, completely forgiven. And I choose. Catch that. To believe it even against these other things that are hammering me from the outside saying, don't believe it. Abraham, your wife is like almost 90. You think she's going to have a baby now? Are you joking? God is playing with you. You're hearing voices.

Oh, our intellect can be pretty, pretty powerful convincer to us can't it? And we're so apt, we'll believe ourselves over God any day of the week. I'll put my intellect above God any day. I will lean on my understanding, and I will kick God's promises to the curb any day of the week until God brings me up short and says, what in the world are you doing, son? Just exactly what are you doing?

Look at verse 20. *"No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (And) ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."*

I want you to consider underlining, circling, highlighting those words, fully convinced. Those are such important words. Fully convinced. Fully convinced. What was Abraham fully convinced about? The answer is in verse 21 again. Look at verse 21, *"fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised*

he was going to do.” He was convinced, all right? So he trusted in the faithfulness of God. Guys, can I just bring out a quick point here?

Please don't think of Abraham as a guy who just believed anything anybody ever said. That's not the definition of faith. Some people think that though. They think, well, if you have faith, you just believe. You believe in people when they say things. Are you joking? You can trust people about as far as you can throw them, right? Abraham was not the kind of guy who just believed in anything everybody said. The reason he believed is because of the person who made the promise.

Do you understand that's what makes the promise good? I can make you all kinds of promises all day long. But I'm not in control of my circumstances. Something might come up and I can't fulfill that promise, right? I might promise my kids, hey kids, we're going on vacation. Yeah, load the car. We're going to be heading out on Friday and then Thursday night, something happens. Sorry, kids, we can't go on vacation. But dad, you promised. I know I'm sorry. I just, I'm not in control that way.

People let you down all the time, but God, He makes a promise. You can bank on it. You can lean on it with all your weight. It's not going anywhere. The Bible says not one of God's good promises has ever hit the ground. In other words, He's faithful. That's why we believe God. It's not just because He said something. It's because of who said something. He said it. Him, the Faithful One, the all-powerful One who is able.

There's a lot of statements in the Bible in fact, that are just very confident in the Lord. Have you ever noticed that? They just make very confident statements. Paul will say things in his letters like, we know that, and then he'll say something.

And I always read those verses, and I ask myself the question, do I know that? I mean, I know it here, but do I really know it? In my heart. Do I believe it? You know what I mean? Well, let me show you one statement of confidence that Paul wrote when he wrote to the church in Ephesus. He said,

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

Now, he's talking about when we pray. We pray and you ask for things, right? Do you ask for things when you pray? I do. I lay my petitions before the Lord. Well, what does Paul say about our petitions? He says, God is able to do abundantly beyond what we even ask or think.

Now, that's a statement of confidence, isn't it? I mean, that's confidence. God is able. He can do it. Let me ask you a question. Do you pray that way? When you pray do you pray going, God can do this.

He is like, He's totally got this dialed in and he can do it. In fact, He's able to do even more than I ask. He's even able to do more than I think. Do you have that confidence? Do you have confidence in the Lord? Let me ask you this. Let's get down to the base of it.

Do you have confidence that your sins are forgiven? Do you know that I ask that question of just about everybody I meet when I, when they come up and talk to me, and when people come up and talk to me after a service, if I don't know them, I want to figure out one thing, and that is, do you have confidence that your sins are forgiven?

I mean, really confident. People will say all the time, oh, I know, Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world, and if we put our faith in Him, we'll go to heaven, and stuff, and then, but it's always, you've got to turn it back and say, well, do you believe that? Well, yeah. No, no, no. Are you confident of it? Yeah. How confident? How confident are you? Remember when you go to the doctor's office, how they have those pain scales and they're supposedly for people that just can't talk.

They have to just point to like, so how much does it hurt? They just point to the little thing and that's how much it hurts. Well, I made up a confidence scale. You ready? For your faith. How confident are you of God's forgiveness in your life?

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN YOUR LIFE?



Number 1. If you could say number 1, I'm convinced and resting in God's confidence. Or maybe you're number 2, you're confident, most of the time. Or number 3, you're confident some of the time. Maybe you're a number 4. Well, occasionally I'm confident or 5. I'm rarely confident. Or maybe you're number 6. I'm never confident - ever. I like to ask that question of people because it just tells you a lot where they're at.

If you had to, if I handed out a piece of paper here today and I asked you to write down a simple number corresponding to one of those expressions of confidence, what would you say?

Now, can I just tell you something completely without any desire to appear righteous in your eyes? I'm a number one. But not because I'm a good person. In fact, I know that I'm a total loser. Jesus came and saved a total loser. I was enslaved in sin when He came to die for me on the cross. But you know what?

I know that I'm forgiven because Jesus died on the cross. And I believe that when He said, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30) It was finished. And there's nothing more that needs to be done to make it real or active in my life. Nothing more that I, nothing more. Do you hear me? Nothing more.

I am completely confident that what he did and it's done. It's done. It's over. I'm a number 1. And again, it has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with Him. When people say to me, and I'll be honest with you, most people are a two or three when I talked to them.

The majority of the people I talked to are a two, or three. And I'll say, are you confident that your sins have been forgiven? And they usually like, yeah, but there's that hesitation. And I'll say, okay, I saw some hesitation there. Why?

Do you know what it always comes back to? They never, I've never had anybody yet doubt what Jesus did on the cross. Their area of doubt is always around them. It's inward. They'll say, well, this last week, I just fleshed out.

And I look at them and I go, what does that have to do with being confident in what Jesus did? What does your actions have to do with anything? Listen, Jesus either died or He didn't. It was either enough or it wasn't.

It was either finished or it's not. And if it is, then you can be confident in it. No matter what. Who does He justify? The ungodly right? Who does He save? He saves sinners. When are we going to get this through our hearts?

When are we going to be able to say, Jesus died for me. The big fat mess up. And I know that I know, that I know I am forgiven today because Jesus died for me. And I believe it with all of my heart. That's what being a Christian is. That's what it's all about you guys. And that's what Paul's trying to convey here.

He's doing it much more elegantly than I am. Probably doesn't spit nearly as much when he talks. It's a good thing those rows are back that far. Do you know what I mean? But he, this is what he's saying.

He ends in verse 23, *“But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, (Abraham meaning)²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”*

And that word delivered up is an interesting word. That was used to deliver people over to face justice in like a court of law. He was delivered up or delivered over for our trespasses. He was raised for our justification. And remember, it is just as if we never sinned.

What did you learn from Romans chapter 4? Let me tell you quickly what I learned. Then we'll close. I learned that the Old Testament doesn't contradict the Gospel of grace.

I learned that instead, the Gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and Abraham, the father of the Jews, is my example of a man who believes God and takes him at His Word. Are you taking God at His Word today?