

Title: Justified Without Works, Justified by Works

Text: Romans 4: 2-3; James 2: 21

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Tonight, our text will be two passages. One is Romans 4: 2-3 and the other is James 2: 21. But before we turn their let's begin by looking again at Ephesians 2: 8-10.

1) Salvation is by the grace of God alone: we have seen clearly from God's holy word that those God chose unto salvation in Christ are saved by grace alone—**Ephesians 2: 8: For BY GRACE are ye saved.** Grace is not merited by the sinner. Grace is God's free, unmerited favor. Grace is given to whomsoever God chooses to be gracious unto—in that sense, grace is God's glory—"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."

2) Salvation is through faith alone:--Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved THROUGH FAITH. All those God the Father chose to salvation, all those Christ Jesus redeemed, shall be regenerated and given faith by God the Holy Spirit. Each one shall—Christ said, John 6: 45: It is written in the prophets, And they shall be ALL taught of God. EVERY MAN—taught of my Father—cometh unto me." Enoch is held up before us as a man who believed God and doing so (Hebrews 11: 5-6) "He had this testimony, that he PLEASED God. But WITHOUT FAITH it is IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM." Christ said in John 3: 18, "He that BELIEVETH on HIM is not condemned: but he that BELIEVETH NOT is condemned already, because he hath not BELIEVED in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

3) Grace, salvation and faith is not of the sinner, all is the GIFT OF GOD—Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. James 1:17: EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

4) No part of salvation is of works so no saved sinner has any room to boast before God—Ephesians 2: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...

God the Father did not choose his people because of any works in us. We are not justified by works—God said of his Son, Christ Jesus, "My righteous servant shall justify many." (Is 53: 11) Romans 8:33, says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Christ came "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and THE JUSTIFIER of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." (Rom 3: 26-27) Furthermore, sinner do not give themselves spiritual life but we are born of God the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2 declares that plainly) Nor do we come to Christ of ourselves—Christ said, John 6:44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. Believers cannot even boast of persevering in faith because we "are kept BY THE POWER OF GOD through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

5) Lastly, we see from God's word that the believe cannot even boast or take credit for our good works because they too are by the grace of God—Ephesians 2: 10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD [SHALL] WALK IN THEM. Believers shall do good works because God before ordained—before prepared—before predestinated that we shall walk in them. God alone works everything to equip and bring his child to walk continually in what we called the "goodness" of the good works—faith, repentance, love, submission, worship or a desire for God to be glorified—it is the heart which God looks on—and God alone gives the heart. Concerning works—God works everything to bring his child to time and place to do the work God before ordained be done. And God alone gives his child the grace to do the good work. So there is absolutely no room for any child of God to boast, not even of good works. We are what we are and do what we do by the grace of God.

That being our introduction, now let's turn to our text. The first passage is in Romans 3.

Romans 4: 2: For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3: For what saith the scripture? 3: Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

James 2: 21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23: And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Some of you have expressed to me that these two passages of scripture have given you difficulty. Having recently, studied Ephesians 2, I think this may be a good time to deal with these two scriptures.

God the Holy Spirit inspired Paul and James, so one is not contradicting the other. These scriptures speak of one man, Abraham, but each passage declares two separate truths.

- Paul speaks of justification before God, James speaks of God justifying, before all who see, that the work he has done for his child is his work, and is genuine.
- Paul speaks of the justification of Abraham's person, James of the justification of Abraham's cause, of his faith being shown to be true faith.
- Paul speaks against works being the cause of justification, James is speaking of those good works God "before ordained" which every true believer shall walk in.
- Paul is dealing with the self-righteous, who trust in their own works for justification; James is dealing with the self-taught, whose doctrine is correct but who have no God-wrought obedience from the heart.
- May God give us grace to see...

Proposition: Believers are justified from our sins by God, which righteousness is received through God-given faith, APART FROM our works. Then God makes it manifest that God has truly given us faith, by causing us to walk in the works God has before ordained.

Abraham is the father of the faithful. The way in which he was saved and the way in which he did these works is how all God's people are saved and bring forth good works.

I. ABRAHAM WAS NOT JUSTIFIED FROM HIS SINS BY HIS WORKS, BUT BY GOD. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST WAS IMPUTED TO ABRAHAM THROUGH FAITH—SO IT IS OF ALL WHO TRULY BELIEVE. Romans 4: 2: For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3: For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Not Justified By Our Works

Abraham could not be justified by works—neither any sinner—because: Abraham was a dead sinner in Ur of Chaldee—a land of idolatry—God gave Abraham spiritual life—like he does all who he saves. Abraham's faith—like ours—was not even of himself—"it is the gift of the God." Paul says, For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."

1 Corinth 1: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...All.

God Preached the Gospel to Abraham

God first came to Abraham and scripture says, God "preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal 3: 8) God spoke to Abraham of God's works. That is what the gospel is which God brings to his child.

Genesis 12: 1: Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Scripture says he believed God when he left Ur—Hebrews 11:8: By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

If you ever believe, it will be because the gospel comes to you, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance—in the day of his power, God will make you believe God because God gives us assurance.

Faith in the Promised Seed

Abraham believed that he and all God's elect would be saved in the promised Seed Christ Jesus. Verse 3 is quoted from Genesis 15:6. There, God gave Abraham the gospel concerning his Son, the Seed in whom and by whom redemption would be accomplished.

Genesis 15: 1: After these things the Word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

The Word that came to Abraham in a vision was THE WORD—Christ himself. Listen to what he declared.

- “I am thy shield.”—Christ is our Shield from divine justice—Our Shield from the wrath of God due us by the curse—our Shield from all our enemies.
- “I am thy exceeding great reward.”—Christ is our Reward of Righteousness, of Free Justification, our Reward who Established the law on behalf of each elect child he represented.

Read Rom 3: 21-Rom 4: 1. 430 years before the law was given on Mt. Sinai, Abraham was justified and established the whole law. How?—through faith in Christ the promised Seed. Christ said,

John 8:56: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

Abraham saw Christ's day in the promise, that “in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed;”—this promise in Genesis 15 was the beginning of that one. Listen.

Genesis 15: 2: And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3: And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.4: And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but HE that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”

In Galatians 3, the Holy Spirit tells us what Abraham saw and believed in that promise. The Spirit of God says it is the same blessing that he gives to us when he gives us faith to see Christ's day.

Galatians 3: 8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12: And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13: Christ hath redeemed

us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15: Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17: And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18: For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Paul says the same thing in our text in Romans 4. Through faith we establish the whole law—that is what our father Abraham found—not by his works, but by believing God—he counted him righteous. Abraham did what faith does, he believed that God could and would do that which was humanly impossible.

Romans 4:18-25) "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. {19} And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: {20} He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; {21} And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. {22} And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. {23} Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; {24} But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; {25} Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

What does it mean to believe God raised Christ from the dead? It is to believe that Christ established the law to God's full satisfaction, declaring God just and satisfying holy justice for his people—that Christ purged all the sin of his people by his one offering. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to you when you believe that through faith in Christ you have established the whole law of God and are righteous in him and you cease going about to establish your own righteousness.

It is through faith in Christ, that God imputes to the believer the Righteous, the free Justification already wrought by Christ—For “with the heart man BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” God does all the work for his people to justify us, all done by Christ for us. God works within his people to bring us to believe on Christ. And through the faith God gives, God counts us righteous in Christ.

Joshua 24:3: And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

Isa 51:2: Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

Romans 4: 3: For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

So we see that God justified Abraham by the finished work of Christ, through faith in Christ who stood as Abraham's Surety. Abraham was NOT JUSTIFIED FROM HIS SIN BY HIS WORKS.

II. THE WORKS JAMES SPEAKS OF ARE WORKS FORORDAINED BY GOD, WHICH GOD WORKS IN HIS CHILD BY GRACE, WHEREBY GOD MAKES KNOWN THAT THE FAITH HE GIVES TO HIS CHILD IS GENUINE FAITH--James 2: 21: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? (Turn to Gen 22)

God said, “Abraham believed God and it imputed to him for righteousness.” By this forordained work which God brought Abraham to walk in, God manifest that scripture to be true. God made it known that Abraham’s profession was true. A man can claim to believe Christ. But if he does not obey Christ, he manifest his claim is vain, dead faith.

Genesis 22: 1: And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

Tempt means this was a trial to prove Abraham’s faith—God will hold Abraham up as a trophy of his grace—just as he will do all his children in the day of judgment when he judges us according to our works—we will be saying, “When did I do this.” God will be the one doing the boasting of what he has worked in his people..

Genesis 22: 2: And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

This is the son “Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Scripture says Abraham believed God—Hebrews 11: 19: Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead. The works God before ordained are not works we would ever think of. Abraham was called to leave Ur—faith and repentance—Abraham staggered not at the promises of God—he accounted that what God promised, God was also able to do.

Believer, notice that in what God called Abraham to do, God was teaching Abraham what God had done for Abraham—a picture of Christ. Know then that any particular work God before ordained for us may be a great trial but we can be sure God will teach us the gospel through it like he did Abraham. With us, seeing what God has done for us—saving us to the uttermost—we know God has already provided the uttermost for us so that we can serve him sacrificially in whatever God brings us to do, trusting God will provide. So Abraham obeyed. He went 3 days till he saw the mountain God pointed out. (Hawker—3 days under sentence of death.

Genesis 22: 5: And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

See, Abraham believed God. That is what these works of faith do—they manifest that we really do believe that God has justified us and accepted us in his Son. How did Abraham justify his claim?

Genesis 22: 6: And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 7: And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering? 8: And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

The works God has before ordained are works we shall do by his grace, trusting that God will provide. Do you believe God? Why not? God does what he promises, “God provided HIMSELF as the Lamb.” God was in Christ reconciling his people unto himself. God purchased his church with his own blood. Do you believe God? Abraham did not say he believed in the sovereign grace of God then make excuses for not doing what God told him to do—he did it! And taught his son the gospel as he did it.

Genesis 22: 9: And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.10: And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11: And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, [Christ the Angel of the Covenant] and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I. 12: And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from ME.

God knew before. God ordained this work before and worked this in Abraham by his grace—but now God made it so we see it and learn from it. God said of Israel,

Deuteronomy 8: 2: And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

What does God make us know about our own hearts?

1 Corinthians 15: 10: ...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

What does God make us to know about him through these pre-ordained works?

Genesis 22: 13: And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

At the end of every trial of faith, he brings us to behold Christ, the Lamb of God, who God provided to take our place by whom we are not accepted and righteous through faith in him. And what does God bring us to confess as he works in us and causes us to work through these trials?

Genesis 22: 14: And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Jehovahjireh—It shall be seen that God has provided.

Genesis 22: 15: And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16: And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: 17: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. 19: So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Hebrews 6: 11: ...We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13: For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14: Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15: And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

James 2: 22: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? [made manifest to be true faith?] **23: And the scripture was fulfilled** [it was shown to us that it was true] **which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.**

By Abrahams' work we know it is true—Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness—he was called the Friend of God.

Amen!

