

Justified by Grace, Not by Law
Romans 4:9-17

The God who saves people also changes people.

The God who saves people puts in them a desire to be holy.

The God who saves people gives them an ability to be holy.

The God of this universe is holy. When He saves people from their sin and His wrath, He calls them to be holy, gives them a desire to be holy and even gives them an ability to live a holy life.

You will not find that anywhere outside of Christianity.

If you don't need to make peace with a holy God, then you don't need to be justified.

Every religion that departs from historical, Biblical Christianity tries to get rid of sin and hell, which means they don't need justification. This is yet another reason why justification separates Christianity from everything else. You will not find justification in Islam or modern Judaism or New Age or Christian Science or Jehovah's Witness or Wicca Witchcraft or Mormonism or anything other than historical, Biblical Christianity.

This is what you need to see in today's Scripture:

*The God who justifies you, also leads you and empowers you to live a righteous life
that exemplifies the righteousness of justification.*

Notice the certainty in God's covenant with Abraham:

I will make, I will bless, I will make, I will bless and I will curse.

This is an unconditional covenant.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. There are two basic types of covenants: conditional and unconditional. Unconditional means there are no conditions or obligations that need to be met by the second party in order for the first party to keep the terms of the covenant.

Abraham was 75 years old when this covenant was made.

Abraham was 99 when the covenant was sealed with circumcision.

Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born in fulfillment of the promise of a child.

The old covenant community emphasized the physical line of Abraham.

The new covenant community emphasizes the spiritual line of Abraham.

In other words, the new covenant community is defined by faith and spiritual life.

You can be black or white or male or female or Greek or Jew or slave or free or Iranian or Russian.

You can be any of that AND be part of the same family at the same time.

Here's what we have: Abraham's justification precedes the existence of the Jewish nation; precedes the giving of the Law; precedes the rite of circumcision. God declared Abraham to be righteous before anything religious or Jewish happened in Abraham's life.

Your spiritual heritage traces back to Jesus and the Apostles and includes Abraham.

Abraham is your spiritual forefather as a man of faith, not law.

Abraham is the forever earthly example of justification by grace, not by law.

Home Group Discussion Questions:

1. What was something new or challenging that you heard in this week's message?
2. In the past few weeks as we've covered justification, what has encouraged you or impressed you with the God of justification?
3. Here's the flow of events in Abraham's life as recorded in Genesis:

Gen 12 – Promise of land, nation, blessing

Gen 12 – Back to Egypt, presents his wife as his sister

Gen 15 – God establishes His covenant with Abraham

Gen 16 – Abraham has a child outside of marriage

Gen 17 – Circumcision

Gen 20 – Sarah is said to be his sister again

Gen 21 – Isaac is born, the presence of his other son creates tension

Gen 25:1,6 – Abraham had at least two concubines

And yet...Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

4. How can it be that Abraham was credited with righteousness when he struggled to live righteously?
5. Can you relate to this up and down lifestyle of Abraham?
(He seems to want to obey God but then he makes choices that are displeasing to God.)
6. Consider Abraham's age when he received the promise and again when the child was born.
What reasons may God have had for choosing an old man?
What reasons may God have had for making Abraham wait so long between the promise of a child and the birth of a child?