

THE IMPORTANCE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

ROMANS 4:1–8

INTRODUCTION

The gospel is the **greatest news ever proclaimed** because it communicates the **greatest plan of salvation** ever conceived.

It is God's plan to save His chosen people **through the work of His Son on the cross** by atoning for their sins.

God's plan **overcomes the problem of sin** which **demands His judgement** as a righteous and just God.

The atoning work of Christ on the cross is how God can save His people from His judgement for their sin while acting **consistently with His righteousness and justice**.

This is what Paul explained in **chapter 3**.

Through his explanation, we learn that **the heart of God's plan** — the heart of this good news message—is the doctrine of **justification by faith**.

That is the way by which **the righteous God righteously "righteouses" the unrighteous**.

To say that another way, justification by faith is God's righteous way of making sinners right with Him.

As Paul continues into **chapter 4**, he places a great emphasis on **faith alone** as the **means by which** God makes sinners right.

It was Paul's emphasis on being declared right with God **through faith alone** that particularly **set his gospel message apart** from what his Jewish opponents taught.

It is important to grasp that Paul's message **did not contradict** the Old Testament.

The conflict was not between the gospel taught by Paul and that taught by Moses, or David, or Isaiah.

Paul's message was actually **deeply rooted in the Old Testament** and is really an exposition of the gospel message found there.

The conflict was between Paul's message and the **beliefs and practices of Judaism** which **distorted the teaching of the OT**.

We'll see in our study today that Scripture—Old and New Testaments—has **consistently presented a gospel message of justification by faith alone**.

By Paul's day, however, the Jews had distorted that message from **salvation by faith** to **salvation by works**.

This shift, according to Paul, meant that people were not relating to God **on the basis of grace**, but **on the basis of their own merit**.

Paul spent the **first three chapters** of Romans demonstrating that **no one will be declared right with God** on the basis of their own merit.

Not even the most religious Jews were able stand in the right before God because, as Paul summed up his argument in **Romans 3:23**,
“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

So as he **continues in his explanation** of the gospel message, Paul has **a burden that he carries** into **chapter 4**.

His burden in this chapter is to **explain the importance of justification by faith**,

and particularly to emphasise that **faith is God’s means** of making sinners right with Himself, not the works that self-righteous people like the Jews rely on.

This is really important to grasp because according to Paul, **this is the heart of the gospel**.

If there is error or confusion in this matter, then the good news is no longer the greatest message of God’s greatest salvation plan.

If the heart of the gospel is lost, then there is no more good news and those who do not receive God’s saving, justifying grace through faith alone remain condemned in their sins and liable to the eternal judgement of God.

As **John MacArthur** writes—

“If there is any doctrine that the chief enemy of man and of God desires to undercut and distort, it is the doctrine of salvation.

If Satan can cause confusion and error in regard to that doctrine, he has succeeded in keeping men in their sin and under divine judgment and condemnation, which the unredeemed will one day share with Satan and his demonic angels in the eternal torment of hell.”¹

In order to firmly establish the importance of justification by faith, as opposed to works, Paul introduces **the example of Abraham.**

Why Abraham?

The answer is that he was **universally recognised** among the Jews as the **father of their faith** and the **most excellent example** of righteousness.

Everyone agreed that Abraham was the Old Testament’s **supreme example of a godly, righteous man** who is acceptable to the Lord.

He is the **biblical model of genuine faith and godliness.**

If Paul could prove that Abraham was made right with God through faith—not through works—then he would have made a **persuasive argument** to both Jews and Gentiles.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 231.

You see, **the majority of Jews in Paul's day** believed that Abraham was made right with God **because of his own righteous character**.

They believed God chose Abraham to be the father of His people Israel because Abraham was **the most righteous man on earth during his time**.

This **teaching of the rabbis** is represented in a number of the Jewish apocryphal books.

They taught that Abraham was justified by keeping God's law.

In ***Ecclesiasticus***, Abraham is said to have become right with God because of his obedience (44:19–21).

In the ***Prayer of Manasseh***, we read an even bolder claim that Abraham was completely sinless:

“Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who did not sin against thee” (v. 8).

In ***The Book of Jubilees*** the writer says,

“Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life” (23:10).

Some rabbis even claimed that Abraham was so inherently good that he began serving God when he was three years old.²

² All references above from MacArthur, *Romans*, 233.

That is precisely why Paul used Abraham to continue his argument on the **importance of justification by faith alone**—

By presenting Abraham as the **supreme example of justification**, or salvation, **by faith alone**, Paul was making his point while undermining the foundation of rabbinical teaching.

By demonstrating that Abraham was not justified by works, Paul was presenting a compelling argument that no one can be made right with God by keeping the law, that is, by means of our **own religious efforts and accomplishments**.

So Paul used the very person that the Jews thought was justified by his own righteousness to prove that everyone must be justified by the righteousness of God that He gives to His people through faith alone.

PROPOSITION

So as we study **Romans 4:1–8**, we'll see Paul's emphasis on **the importance of justification by faith alone**.

The reason why this is so important for you to understand is that it is **the very heart of the gospel**—the good news of God's plan of salvation.

If there is error or confusion here, you remain under the judgement of God.

On the other hand, **if you are clear and are convinced** so that you relate to God on the basis of His grace rather than your own merit or accomplishments, then **you have the assurance** of being declared righteous in His sight.

So this is important because **your salvation depends on getting this right!**

As an outline, we'll follow the **simple progression of Paul's argument** as he explains the importance of justification by faith alone in **three steps**:

1. **Justification is not by works (1–2)**
2. **Justification is by faith alone (3–5)**
3. **Justification by faith alone is biblical and best (6–8)**

1. JUSTIFICATION IS NOT BY WORKS (1-2)

Paul is **continuing to explain** the good news of the gospel which he began to do back in **3:21**.

Prior to that he had **demonstrated the universal need** of both Jew and Gentile for the righteousness of God according to the gospel.

In other words, he spent the first two and a half chapters **explaining the bad news** that makes the good news so good.

Beginning in **3:21**, however, he **explains and applies** the gospel message in **positive terms**.

After writing **verses 21–26** which has been called **the most important paragraph in the Bible**,³ Paul draws out an inference in **verses 27–28**—

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

As he continues to develop his argument in **chapter 4**, he picks up on **this idea of boasting** and asks in **4:1–2**—

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God!

³ Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 156.

In the opening verse, Paul introduces **Abraham as the example** that everyone agrees should settle the matter.

If Abraham was really justified by works—as the rabbis taught and many Jews believed—then Paul’s gospel message of justification by faith alone would be disproved.

On the other hand, if the Scripture speaks of Abraham being justified by faith alone, then Paul would have settled the dispute with a case that no one could deny.

So how does Paul present his question then?

He is clearly **addressing the Jews primarily** since he refers to Abraham as, “**our forefather according to the flesh.**”

Later in **chapter 4** Paul will argue that Abraham is the **spiritual father** of all who believe—both Jew and Gentile.

But at this stage, he is referring to the **physical descendants of Abraham**, the Jews, who had been **taught by the false teachings of Judaism** to earn a right standing with God through their religious efforts and accomplishments.

The principle, of course, is as **relevant and important** for us as Gentiles as it was to the Jews of Paul’s day.

It is especially compelling for us who have been brought up in Christian families and have been taught from the earliest age to be obedient to God.

In our religious context, we can often **think more like the self-righteous Jews** than the pagan Gentiles of Paul’s time.

Paul asks a simple question—if we consider the example of Abraham, what do we learn?

What did Abraham discover, and what can we discover by considering Abraham, about justification?

Paul then uses **verse 2** to answer the question that Abraham **was not, and could not be**, justified by works.

His point is that if justification by works was not possible for Abraham—the supreme example of a godly, righteous man—
then it is not possible for anyone.

We should remember that in his letter to Rome, Paul has presented **justification** as **primarily an eschatological event.**

It refers to **God's verdict in the final judgement** that the justified one is not guilty and in right standing before Him.

The **assurance of this final verdict** is given to believers in Christ even now in the present so that
in a very real sense we are already justified.

The end-time focus, though, reminds us that God will **vindicate believers** on the day of His final judgement when He **publicly declares** to all creation what He has **privately declared** to the believer—that he or she is righteous in God's sight.

That is the context in which the idea of boasting makes sense.

Paul says that if Abraham was, as the Jews believed, justified by works then he would have **“something to boast about.”**

You can imagine it—if Abraham is declared righteous on the final stage before all creation, and it was his works that earned that status, then he would have every reason to boast in his accomplishments, **just like an olympian** boasting as they are presented with a gold medal.

But in Paul's mind, **that is exactly what disproves** the idea that Abraham, or anyone, could be justified by works.

He has already stated in **3:27** that God's plan for making sinners right with Himself **excludes all human boasting**.

The ultimate purpose of the gospel is not to save sinners, but to glorify God in the salvation of sinners.

In simpler terms, God's plan for salvation is not designed to make men and women look great, but to make God look great.

Paul explains this principle in greater detail in **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**—

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may abolish the things that are,

²⁹ so that no flesh may boast before God. [PTO]

³⁰ **But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,**

³¹ **so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”**

You see, **God would simply not allow** a system of human achievement because then it would make human boasting in their achievements legitimate.

In other words, if justification was by works then it would **glorify the one who is justified**, not the God who justifies.

As Paul presents this argument, he makes it clear that God is **opposed to any form of human boasting** which is why he says in **verse 2** that Abraham would **NOT** have something to boast about before God!

The “**works**” that Abraham is referring to in this verse are **simple acts of obedience**, not specifically works of the law since Abraham lived before the Mosaic law.

So Paul’s point is that **no one, including Abraham**, can ever be declared right with God because of their obedience to God—because of their religious efforts and achievements.

The reason is simple—because that would give them reason to boast, but God is absolutely opposed to the prideful boasting of human achievement.

Paul’s first step in his explanation of the importance of justification by faith is to **clearly and emphatically** state that justification **is not, and can not be**, by works.

2. JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH ALONE (3–5)

If **step one** in Paul's argument is to **refute the confusion and error of his opponents**,

then **step two** is to make his case **positively** for the importance of justification by faith alone.

Paul's burden here is to **present the key biblical text** and **explain how it clearly establishes** that God declares sinners to be righteous through faith alone—

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS COUNTED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

For Paul, the authority in this matter is not human reasoning but the revelation of Scripture.

Therefore, he quotes **Genesis 15:6** as key text from the Old Testament for **two reasons**:

First, **Genesis 15:6** is a **foundational text** that establishes God's plan for declaring sinners right with Himself.

This is one of those verses from the Old Testament on which the writers of the New Testament heavily depended, especially the apostle Paul.⁴

⁴ Palmer O. Robertson, "Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text," *Westminster Theological Journal* 42, no. 2 (1979): 269.

Second, Paul wanted to demonstrate that the gospel is in **continuity with the Old Testament**.

This verse proves that God justification by faith alone has **always been God's plan** for saving sinners.

Some Christians, much like the Jews of Paul's day, think that God's plan in the OT was to give the law so that those who had enough righteousness in themselves could earn their salvation by their religious efforts and accomplishments.

However, as **Genesis 15:6** and the example of Abraham decisively prove, God has only ever given the gift righteousness to those who trust His gracious provision instead of their own meritorious efforts.

If this verse is so important to both the Old and New Testament message of how God righteously righteouses the unrighteous, **then what exactly does it say?**

Genesis 15 records Yahweh's elaboration on a promise He first gave to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**—

¹ And Yahweh said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, And from your kin And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;

³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

This is rightly understood as God's **announcement** of the **Abrahamic covenant**, but the covenant is **only formalised** in **Genesis 15**.

As Yahweh elaborates there on what He meant by promising to make Abraham—or at the time “**Abram**”—
who was at that point still childless, a “**great nation**,”
He says to Abram in **Genesis 15:4** that “**one who will come forth from your own body**” will be his heir.

Then in **verse 5** Yahweh brought him outside and said—
“**Now look toward the heavens, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.**” And He said to him, “**So shall your seed be.**”

In response to this almost unbelievable covenant promise, we read in **verse 6**—
“**Then he believed in Yahweh; and He counted it to him as righteousness.**”

In order to understand what this verse means, we need to take note of the key word “**counted**.”

The LSB very helpfully **translates it consistently** in both the OT and NT so that we **can notice its importance**.

Both the **Hebrew verb** here in **Genesis 15** and the **Greek verb** in **Romans 4** carry the sense of “**considering**,” or “**counting**” something to be a certain way, which is how both Moses and Paul use them.

But what does “**counting**” or “**crediting**”—as some translate it—Abraham’s faith “as righteousness” mean?

Some make the same error as the Jews of Paul’s day by **misunderstanding** it to mean that Abraham’s faith is equated with righteousness.

That is, Abraham’s belief is taken by God to be a righteous act.

Scripture is clear that faith itself is not an accomplishment that God rewards.

But the **Hebrew construction** in this verse, which is carried over in the **Greek**, suggests a different interpretation.

“Counting” Abraham’s faith as righteousness means
“to account to him a righteousness that does not
inherently belong to him.”⁵

When Abraham believed Yahweh, Yahweh granted him the status of “righteousness”—

He considered him “right” before God.⁶

He was given a righteousness from God that was not his own.

You can see, then, why this verse is **foundational to the message of salvation** in both the Old and New Testaments.

⁵ Robertson, *WTJ* 42, 265.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 145.

Paul continues in **the next two verses** to explain how this text **clearly establishes** that God declares sinners to be righteous through faith alone—

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not counted according to grace, but according to what is due.

Undoubtedly with his **Jewish opponents in mind**, Paul explains that their way of relating to God is **false and futile**.

Since they rely not on faith but on works, Paul points out that the foundation of their relationship is one of **human merit**.

Those who rely on their works to be made right with God are relating to Him “**according to what is due**.”

In other words, they are NOT looking to God to give them a gift of His grace, but the **just payment of what they are owed**.

In fact, Paul **emphasises how different this is** to relating to God on the basis of His grace by stating that the one who works expects to receive a “**wage**.”

The self-righteous man or woman expects their **religious efforts and accomplishments** to **earn them a right standing** and favour with God.

They don't want a gift of grace—
they want the **payment of their hard earned wages**.

In short, they don't see God as a gracious Saviour; they see Him as **an employer who must compensate** His most diligent workers fairly according to their efforts.

Clearly, Paul intends to display the **absurdity of this manner** of relating to God **in order to point out** the false and futile foundation it is built on.

Even if God would offer such an arrangement
—which He wouldn't since it would then glorify man's religious achievement—

there is no one who would qualify since, as Paul has already argued in **3:10**—

¹⁰ **“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE”**

He even explicitly states in **3:20** that—

²⁰ **By the works of the Law NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**

Paul moves his argument forward from the absurdity of trying to make oneself right with God by works

to **verse 5** and his **clearest statement on the importance** of being declared right with God through trusting in His gracious gift alone.

As **John Piper** claims, “*Romans 4:5 is perhaps the most important verse on justification by faith alone in all the New Testament.*”⁷

⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes upon Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

⁷ Andrew David Naselli, *Romans: A Concise Guide to the Greatest Letter Ever Written* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 61.

Here Paul **uses the contrast for the sake of emphasis**, describing the right way to relate to God as not only believing Him, but refusing to rely on works.

Through the use of **a negative and a positive description**, Paul is drawing our attention to the **importance of justification by faith alone**.

The only means by which a sinner can be declared right in the sight of God is faith.

Instead of simply saying, though, that such a person who is righteous by faith alone believes in God and His promises, Paul writes **one of the most remarkable statements** in the Bible.

Paul refers to God as **“Him who justifies the ungodly.”**

This remarkable statement says **something about Abraham** and **something about about God**—
both of which **strike at the heart** of self-righteous Judaism.

First, this statement says that Abraham was himself unrighteous—he was **“ungodly.”**

Abraham could not serve as an example of righteous obedience in himself, as the rabbis taught.

In fact, the OT paints a very **honest picture of Abraham’s sins and shortcomings**.

Joshua 24:2 tells us that his father, **Terah**, was a pagan idolater and so Abraham would have been raised as a pagan worshipper of false gods.

In all likelihood, he had not even heard of the name of Yahweh when He called Abraham to leave his home in **Genesis 12**.

As you follow the Abraham narrative in Genesis, you see him repeatedly fail by **cowardly and deceitfully** telling powerful men that Sarah was his sister, not his wife.

He embraces Sarah's foolish plan to father offspring through her maidservant **Hagar** instead of patiently waiting for Yahweh to fulfil His promise.

Quite simply, **he's not a great example** of anything—
except consistent faith in Yahweh.

Second, Paul's statement that God "**justifies the ungodly**" tells us something **even more remarkable about God Himself.**

Yahweh's self-revelation in **Exodus 34:6-7** describes Him as—

⁶ **"Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;**
⁷ **who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."**

Yahweh's righteousness and justice mean that He upholds what is right and just, as He declares in **Exodus 23:7**—
“**I will not justify the guilty.**”

We even read in **Proverbs 17:15** that—

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh.

So how can Paul much such an astonishing claim that God “**justifies the ungodly**”?

If we look back at **Romans 3:21–26**, we see again why it may well be the most important paragraph in the Bible.

There Paul explained that God can uphold His righteousness while gifting all who believe “**the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ**” (**22**).

God can do that because of **Christ's substitutionary atonement** on the cross where He took the place of guilty sinners to propitiate God's wrath.

But as we look forward, **the answer is also found here** in **chapter 4** in Paul's repeated use of the key word “**counted.**”

We encountered that word earlier, but now we need to **understand more of the importance** of what Paul intends in using this term.

You see, Paul is not only explaining the importance of justification by faith alone,

but **he is also developing our understanding of how this justification works.**

By using the term “**counted**,” Paul is referring to what theologians call the **imputation of righteousness.**

How can God declare those who are actually guilty to be righteous, and not participate in something abominable?

The answer to that question is the doctrine of **imputation**, wherein sinners who are unrighteous are **counted to be** righteous on the basis of Christ’s saving work.

Imputation is defined as the judicial reckoning or forensic transfer of one person’s sin or righteousness to another.⁸

Perhaps it is easiest to think of it in accounting terms...

It is a twofold act:

God imputes—that is, counts, credits, or reckons—our sin to Christ and punishes Him in our place,

and He imputes His righteousness to us and grants us salvation and eternal life in Christ.

In other words, imputation involves **both** forgiveness **and** the provision of a righteous status before God.

⁸ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 931.

The clearest text on this is **2 Corinthians 5:21**—

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

You see, the same God who “**will not justify the guilty**” (Exodus 23:7) can, as Paul claims, “**justify the ungodly**” because **He does so in a righteous manner** in

the great exchange of our sin for the righteousness of God through Christ.

He can “**justify the ungodly**” because Christ’s work on the cross **upholds the righteousness of God** in declaring sinners righteous.

That is why John Stott’s clever saying so aptly captures the **heart of that gospel** when he refers to

the righteous God righteously righteousing the unrighteous.

So as we find the answer to Paul’s most remarkable statement, we find **not only an explanation** of the importance of justification by faith alone, **but also an explanation** for how it works.

3. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE IS BIBLICAL AND BEST (6–8)

The third and final step in Paul's argument is to prove that the incredible claims he's just made about justification by faith alone **are not only biblical, but best.**

The heart of God's gospel message—the good news of His plan to save His people from their sin—is justification by faith alone.

This isn't just good news; **it's the BEST news.**

This is the greatest message ever proclaimed because it **explains and applies** the greatest plan of salvation ever conceived.

The magnificence of God's way of **righteously righteousing the unrighteous** is what Paul emphasises now—

⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

⁸ BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

Even though Paul now quotes David and his words from **Psalms 32:1–2**, **he hasn't moved on** from discussing the example of Abraham.

In typical Jewish fashion, **Paul is confirming the truth** he has found in **a text from the “Law”** (Genesis 15:6) with **a text from the “Writings”** (Psalm 32:1–2).

In these verses, **David joins his testimony to that of Moses**, revealing that it is people “to whom God counts righteousness apart from works” that are truly blessed.

Therefore, in quoting David, Paul is proving that justification by faith alone is **both biblical and best**.

This quote from **Psalm 32** is not meant to be a major point in Paul’s argument, but is meant to **confirm and clarify** what he has already said.

As such, by quoting David **within his larger use of the example of Abraham**, Paul is **doing two things**.

First, Paul is emphasising the **one aspect of justification** which is **the removal of guilt**.

In other words, David’s words **beautifully illustrate** part of what justification by faith alone accomplishes—
forgiveness of sin.

Since this is **the main problem** that Paul has highlighted in **the first three chapters** of his letter,
this is an **eloquent presentation of the solution**.

For the one who does not rely on works, according to human merit, there is the precious promise of sins covered, never to be taken into account or considered by God.

Paul will advance his argument in **chapter 5** with an explanation of **the other aspect of justification**—the imputation of **the righteousness of God through Christ**.

Second, Paul is burdened to prove not only that justification by faith alone is important because it is the **biblical solution** to man's problem of sin, but also **because it is the best solution**.

Here we see **David's repeated reference** to how **blessed and happy the forgiven one** is **echoing into Paul's argument** that the one who is justified by faith alone is then in the position of being the **happiest and most blessed of all people**.

Here we find **the heart of the good news**—God accepts us, through our faith, just as we are.

In His grace **He “covers” our sins**, not counting them against us.

Surely the one who receives this benefit from God **through the means of faith alone** has to be the **happiest and most blessed of all people!**

This is what makes the good news the best news.

This is what makes God's plan of salvation the greatest ever conceived and the gospel message the greatest ever proclaimed.

CONCLUSION

After following him through **the three steps of his argument**, we've seen Paul's concern to highlight the **importance of justification by faith alone**.

His burden was to **make the gospel clear and compelling** by explaining **the heart of the gospel**—

how the righteous God makes unrighteousness people right with Him by **exchanging their sin for His righteousness** which is **received through faith alone**.

The good news of God's plan of salvation is **essential to understand correctly** because if there is **error or confusion** here, you remain under the judgement of God.

However, it is not enough to accurately grasp the fundamentals of the gospel, as if all that is needed to be right with God is an **intellectual agreement** with the essentials of His plan.

No, friends, Paul's burden is to make the gospel clear **in order to compel you** to abandon your reliance on your own religious efforts and accomplishments

and embrace the righteousness of God which He will impute to you by faith alone.

You must, therefore, put your faith in Him!

You must not only recognise the plan of God **but rest in it too** so that you will **receive by faith** the great exchange of your sin and guilt for the righteousness of God through Christ.

This is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ that is for all who believe.

Do you believe?

Are you **the happiest and most blessed** of all men and women because you are free of the guilt and condemnation that your sin deserves?

Or do you still tremble before **God as the angry judge** whose righteous judgement causes you to fear because you know that He will judge you guilty and worthy of damnation?

Or do you **rejoice before God as your Father** whose smile and loving affection you are assured of through Jesus Christ and the right standing you have before God through Him?

So, friend, as you now **understand the importance** of justification by faith alone, **this is the essential question**—

Do you believe?

BENEDICTION

2 Corinthians 13:14

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.**