

# Paul's Case for Saving Faith

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Date: 12 October 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, happy Thanksgiving, everyone. All right. Thank you for the two welcomes back. Thank you and welcome those who are visiting with us,! those who are passing through, those who are just visiting family.

I want to welcome you to our church or time of worship. My name is Pastor, my name is BK, and I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here at this wonderful church. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Romans chapter 4.

Romans chapter 4. If you do not know anything much about Romans chapter 4, it essentially is the teaching that Paul elaborates on what is called the teaching of the justification by faith alone.

Or a better way to say it is how sinners can be made right with God. How do we, a broken people, earn or get the righteousness that God gives to us?

Or another way, it's simply how are we saved by faith? Before I go any further, let me just read the text that is before us, starting in verse 1. This is Paul writing, What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather, according to the flesh?

[ 1 : 31 ] For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. And to the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Verse 7. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Is this blessing then only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised?

For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?

[ 2 : 41 ] Well, it was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal in the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness could be counted to them as well. And to make him the father of the circumcised, who are not merely circumcised, but also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

So if you do not know or understand what's going on here, I've kind of been using this courtroom motif. Paul is essentially dealing with two great questions that every New Testament church faced. And that question was, How Jewish do I need to become to become a Christian? How Jewish do I need to become? Because there was this group of men that were called Judaizers.

They continued, anytime there would be a new church, They'd kind of infiltrate and they'd want to put conditions upon salvation. One, you need to be circumcised.

[ 3 : 59 ] Because we learn in the Old Testament that when a newborn baby was born eight days later, he was circumcised. That identified him with the people of God.

We know that they had the covenants. We know that they had the festivals. So the questions were, Do we need to keep them? Which ones do we keep? How many? What's the purpose in it all? And what's interesting is that Jesus Christ, Paul, and every other apostle stated, No, your faith is not contingent upon becoming Jewish.

So the Jews protested. If you know the Church of Rome, it's a very influential church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. And the Gentiles are starting to think, Wow, if we have to become more Jewish, Am I going to be an outsider to the faith?

So for the rest of my life, Am I going to be an outsider? So Paul, we're going to learn more about that in chapter 5. But there was an accusation that was given against Paul.

[ 5 : 04 ] And that accusation was simple. It's you're preaching a different gospel. You're preaching a different gospel than what we know and understand from the Old Testament.

How could you be from God? How could you be truly an apostle if you taught this other gospel? So Paul, in Romans 4, makes the defense for this gospel.

So I need with you to picture with me kind of a law and order type of courtroom. Paul is the litigator. He is proving that they don't have to become more Jewish in order to do so.

So Paul actually comes up with a five-step plan to answer the Jewish concerns. Last week, we looked at the first two steps. The first step that Paul did is he calls Abraham to the witness stand. Now, Abraham was the father of the nation, the friend of God, the one every Jew looked back to and said, that's my lineage, that's my proof, and that's why I'm saved.

[ 6 : 12 ] I know I'm right with God because I'm Jewish and I am a child of Abraham. Now, Paul would say that Abraham, considered the greatest Jewish person, can boast about his wonderful works that Pastor Dave read for us this morning.

But his boast can only be before men. It can't be before God. It can only be before men. So he says, Man, he does have something to boast about.

But he does not before God. So even the father of the Jewish faith cannot boast before God. We looked at step two of Paul's litigation.

And he said, Well, what does Scripture say? What does the holy book tell us about Abraham? And he reads to us from Genesis 15, 6.

15, 6 simply says, Verses 5 and 6, it says, And he, God, brought him, Abraham, outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them.

[ 7 : 37 ] Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And Abraham believed the Lord, and God counted to him as righteousness.

What Paul is proving is that Abraham is made right with God by his belief and not his works. So this morning we're going to look at the three final phases of this case.

So one we read is God calls Abraham to the stand. Step two, Paul proves that Abraham was saved by faith. Step three, we're going to look at what Paul's argumentation is.

What's his main argument? And step four, Paul's going to bring another witness, the King David, to the stand. He's going to ask him. He's going to show that King David corroborates Abraham's witness.

And the fifth step we're going to look at is, what does evidence of faith look like? What does evidence of faith look like?

[ 8 : 45 ] I read this to you last week, and I'm going to say it again this week. What I'm talking about here is not just some theological grandiose idea. The point Paul is making in this text is a matter of life and death.

It is a matter of eternal destiny. Because if the Jews can prove that Abraham was justified by works, we, you and I, had better have more works than Abraham to be justified.

If the Jews can prove that Abraham was made right with God by the law, we had better follow that law perfectly.

And if the Jews can prove that Abraham was justified by the rituals, then that would place a burden on us to never, ever miss a single ritual.

But this morning, if Paul can prove that Abraham was justified by his faith, then you and I have hope.

[ 10 : 00 ] We have a chance. We can stand before God. That there is hope for guilty sinners like us before a just and holy God.

If not, we're in big trouble. Now, I need you to understand this. What I'm presenting to you is not negotiable.

There is no other doctrine. This is the doctrine, the teaching on which the church of Jesus Christ either stands or falls upon.

Martin Luther called the justification by faith alone, the article by which the church stands or falls. If we lose this, we lose the gospel.

If we blur this, we blur salvation. If we add works to this faith, we destroy grace. So let me take you to Paul's third step, which is his argument.

[11:10] So I want you to look at how Paul thinks through this process. Before I do anything more, let me pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, there's such a seriousness to this teaching, oh Father, and Lord, I pray that my, Stephen, my passion and my words and my desire to communicate this so clearly to everyone here could be heard and seen in the means that it matters, in the means that provokes and changes our hearts.

It realigns our wills. It causes us to confess. It causes us to seek out your truth, oh God. Lord, so far, for this morning, I ask for clarity of words.

I ask for words that do not stumble upon one another. And Father, I ask here for hearts that are willing and wanting to learn. For those who are just here because they love their parents or their friends or whoever invited them in their showing respect, I pray that they would learn the truth, the crux of Christianity, of why this faith matters.

And I pray more than anything, they get a glimpse of God, that they can come out of this service understanding God more today than they did yesterday, more this hour than they did last hour. Because when they can know something more of God, they can make a better decision about you, oh Lord. So I ask you these things, your most holy and precious name.

[12:50] Amen. So let's look at Paul's argument. It's a pretty simple argument. And it begins in verse four. It says, Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due.

And to the one who does not work, but believes in him, that's Jesus, who justifies the ungodly, faith is counted as righteousness. Now we know that this, this argument that Paul is making is pretty simple.

It's almost as if he's looking into the eyes of the, the, the journey says, let's cross examine this idea of works. Let's run the logic of wages through everyday life.

It says, to the one who works, his wages aren't a gift. They're what he's owed. But to the one who does not work, and instead believes his faith is counted as righteousness.

It's a simple argument. It's a straightforward argument. And it's also a devastating argument. Think about this for a moment. When you work and you put in your 40 hours, when your boss gives you your check, your employer, sorry, it wasn't politically correct to say boss, but your employer hands you a check, do you say, thank you for this generous gift?

[14:13] Thank you for this wonderful gift that you have bestowed upon me. Anybody here do that? No. Because you know why?

You earned it. You actually have every right to that paycheck. Your paycheck is your rightful due. In fact, if your employer doesn't give you that paycheck, you have the rights to sue him because you have exchanged your works for that payment.

So never make the mistake in thinking that wages are not grace. Wages are justice. You with me on that? Wages are justice. But our thinking is so out of line, and I'm going to explain it.

Not just this idea, but an extension of that. So if justification, if salvation can be earned with works, then God would be paying us a wage, right?

What it would mean is that God would be settling accounts. In case you're not understanding this, if you had works, and you believed your works led to salvation, God owes you.

[15:32] Think about that for a second. You can indebted God to you. Now the thought you should be having in your head right now is, that's crazy.

Wait, this is God, the creator of heaven and earth, this entire universe. He's created this incredible body, which sadly is breaking down a little bit more, a little bit more aches and pains.

But it still functions, right? If I cut the platelets block and the, the bleeding doesn't continue on. It's amazing. It's an incredible creation by God.

Yeah. God owes me. You know, because I've prayed that prayer, right? Hey God, if you do this for me, I'll do that for you.

Anybody have that kind of prayer or that thinking, man, if I come to church five times in a row, right? You're going to find me a good wife. Are you going to make my children good?

[16:34] I'll get that promotion at work. So it's like we're bargaining with God. I'm such a good parent. How could my kids not love Jesus?

I'm such a great spouse. Why doesn't my spouse love me the way I want to be loved? God, if I pray and if I did these things, am I not guaranteed something?

God, don't you owe me something? I prayed. I did good. I gave. I was a good parent, a good spouse. And here's the thinking.

When we begin to think like that, we're actually thinking that that would be fair. That would be fair. If I do these things, God owes me. They want God to be fair.

They want God to be just. But Paul simply says here, justification doesn't work like that. You can't earn it.

[ 17 : 41 ] You don't deserve it. So here's the question. How much praying do you need to pray to get right with God? God. How good do you need to be to be made right with God?

How much do you, how good enough do you need to be? How much do you need to give? How much do you need to pray? What kind of parent do you need to be?

What's the perfect spouse look like? If God would only give us the standard. Oh yeah, he did. You know what the standard is? Perfection. Perfection.

God is a holy God. If our salvation was based on perfection, guess what? We all fail. Don't be foolish enough to think that you are perfect. Hey man, I've lived a great life.

I always say, look around you. Have you hurt anybody? Have you made misery of someone's life? Guess what? That's on you. Even those unintentional things you do that cause destruction, it's on you.

[ 18 : 48 ] See, here's the thing. If God were paying out what we actually deserve, we rightfully get eternal judgment in hell. That is when someone says, I want God to be fair.

I want God to be just. That's it. That's fair. But God does something that's kind of crazy. You see, he justifies us.

This act of making us righteous is a gift. It's not a work. It's not something we earn. Notice he says, to the one who does not work, but believes.

Now, for many of us, our pride gets a little, there, right? What do you mean my works don't matter? Surely I must contribute something.

Surely I've got to show God how serious I am before him. But the gospel says, not by works, not by effort, not by merit, simply by faith.

[ 20 : 03 ] Now, if that weren't disturbing enough, he really rattles their change. And he says, him, God, who justifies the ungodly. ungodly.

Notice he does, notice he doesn't say that God justifies, not the godly, not the cleaned up, not the respectable. He says the ungodly.

Yes, the one who didn't pray enough, wasn't good enough, didn't give enough, was not a good enough parent or spouse. It's not that you weren't close. Guess what? You're ungodly.

That's how far you are from God. If you had any pride at this moment, it's getting crushed under Paul's weight of argument in this courtroom.

And he says, God declares righteous, not those who are already righteous, but those who are ungodly.

[ 21 : 09 ] This is what we call the scandal of justification. You see, this teaching, religious people hated.

Legalists hated. But I'm going to tell you right now, if you recognize here today that you are indeed a sinner before God, you rejoice in this teaching.

This is the greatest and glorious teaching that you could ever hear. No other religion in the world says this. Do you know that? No other religion. You can go look at every other religion in the world. They're always going to tell you that works matter. God says, yeah, whatever. Like you could even do any work that would please me.

Get it over with. Like, who do you think you are? See, every other religion wants God to owe them something.

[ 22 : 14 ] Now, let's think for a moment. We're in this courtroom. The Jews are listening. Shock. Awe. Now, they would have been floored by this decision that the idea or the statement justify the ungodly because they understand that the Old Testament says, I will not justify the wicked.

That's found in Exodus 23, seven. They would have turned to Proverbs 17, five. He who justifies the wicked is an abomination. That, that can't be God. God can't justify.

So the question that they would have is how, how, how can Paul say that God justifies the ungodly? If you've been with us, this is what Romans 3, 26 teaches us.

God put forward Jesus Christ as payment for our sins. You're right. You are guilty, but God pays your debt. He became a propitiation.

It means a worthy payment. It is the, the big Bible word. That means Jesus took the punishment for our sins. So that's God's anger would be turned away from us.

[ 23 : 21 ] Propitiation means Jesus took our place. So God could forgive us instead of being mad with us. So the question is the cross makes it possible for God to justify the ungodly without compromising his justice.

This is what we call gospel logic. God remains just and the justifier of the one who has faith, in Jesus. Well, let me just say to the weary Christian who feels like you never, ever measure up. Anybody else? Anybody like here feel that? You just don't measure up. There's got to be more that I can do. My advice to you is rest.

Rest. Rest in this truth. Stop trying to turn salvation into a wage.

Here's the news flash. God didn't hire you. God adopted you. God didn't hire. God adopted you.

[ 24 : 36 ] Your status with God does not hang on your performance. It hangs on his promise. Amen? To the guilty Christian who feels like somehow you've disqualified yourselves.

Hear this. God justifies the ungodly. God justifies the ungodly. Not the cleaned up. Not the perfect. But the ungodly.

And if you fit into that category of ungodly, congratulations because you qualify for salvation. To the proud Christian who thinks you're doing pretty well, my advice is to be warned and hear these words of Paul.

If you're working for those wages, you're going to get them. But they're not going to be what you think they are. They'll be what you deserve.

And that will be judgment. So in this courtroom of Romans 4, Paul cross examines the very logic of works. He says, You know how wages works.

[ 25 : 48 ] You know how a gift works. Now apply it to salvation. Which one is it? The verdict is clear. Salvation is a gift of grace, not the wages for works.

This is why Abraham stands as exhibit A. Not because he worked his way into God's favor. Not because he earned his way into God's favor.

But he simply believed. And God counted it as righteousness. So after Paul has taken apart this argument of works, he calls this most unexpected witness.

A corroborating witness. Let's read the text, verse 6. He says, Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works, says, Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. So David would have been pretty big awe-inspiring to call before the courts.

[ 27 : 12 ] David would have been a little bit lesser than Abraham. Abraham is the father of the nation. David is the greatest king to have ever ruled Israel. Abraham represents faith at the beginning.

David represents God's covenant fulfilled in the monarchy. And together they bookend this Jewish identity.

If you guys remember, the first verse of the New Testament is Matthew 1.1. It says, The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The two people that the first sentence in the New Testament links Jesus with both Abraham and David. So Paul says, Fine, let's call David.

Let's hear his testimony. David climbs into the chair and he simply says, Blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven.

[ 28 : 15 ] He doesn't say, Blessed are those who work hard and earn God's righteousness. He does not say, Blessed are those who keep the law.

He declares the blessedness of the one whose sins are forgiven, whose lawless deeds are covered, whose sins are not counted against him.

Now what Paul or David is saying is from Psalm 32. Psalm 32 is the first passage that Clay read to us this morning.

He says, God counts righteousness apart from works. Now notice, justification, salvation, faith in Jesus Christ is described here not as earning righteousness, but as God not counting sin against you.

Now why does that matter? Now some of you, if you're from a Roman Catholic background, there's a teaching that your works kind of get infused with your faith.

[ 29 : 25 ] So your works enough or your faith isn't enough for salvation. So if we can take some of these works, we can kind of put them together and then you'll have righteousness.

That is Roman Catholic teaching. They believe that God infuses righteousness into you so you gradually become righteousness by your cooperation.

With that, it kind of works and then it overturns. Like you become that thing, that righteousness that only God gives you. But Paul here is saying that this is actually a legal term.

And that legal term is God declaring you righteous because your sins are forgiven and that's it. Your sins, you're righteous because your sins are forgiven. Because God takes the righteousness of Jesus Christ and he credits to your account.

[ 30 : 26 ] It's not the process of moral improvement. It's a verdict of acquittal. David didn't say blessed is the man who has achieved a perfect record.

He said, blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Do you get that? That's huge, guys. Now I want you to point out Psalm 32 is so rich and we could have obviously preached a whole sermon, but I want you to pay attention to three words.

There's three words, forgiven, covered, and counted that are so very important to our understanding of salvation. One, forgiveness is legal.

That's when God declares that you are forgiven. That means he no longer counts your sins against you. This idea of covered, it's the blood of the lamb that actually covers your sin.

And three, the not counting is an accounting term. So let me put it this way. When God forgives, he doesn't sweep the sin under the rug. He covers it with the sacrifice of his son.

[ 31 : 37 ] You get that? So it's not this fake cleaning. It's real cleaning. You've been cleaned by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. So when he says he does not count sin, it's not because he forgets it.

It's because he had charged it to the account of Jesus Christ instead of yours. That's what happens. So the debt collector doesn't come after you.

It comes after Jesus Christ. And that debt collector called for a perfect sacrifice. That perfect sacrifice was Jesus Christ.

If you remember the idea of pardon, I brought this up a couple of weeks ago. We read about this in the States. The president can give pardons to people.

That pardon doesn't say that they are not guilty anymore. That pardon says that they cannot be penalized for that sin anymore.

[ 32 : 39 ] But what God does here, it's quite different. not only does he remove the penalty that you were due, he credits you righteousness.

What does that mean? Not only do you walk out of court pardoned and free, but you now walk out of that court as a son of the holy and living God.

You're now his. He's adopted you. You're his child. So why does this teaching matter?

Well, if you are a person here who is drowning in guilt, I want you to hear David's testimony.

Blessedness is possible not because you erase your past, but because God forgives your past.

You with me on that? Blessings is possible not because you erase your past, but because God forgives your past. To the person trying to earn God's approval, I want you to hear what David says.

[ 33 : 50 ] He says, blessedness isn't in works, it's in forgiveness. It's in having your sins covered. That is what it is to be blessed.

And to the believer who is still here, probably carrying the weight of shame from sins, whether it be in your recent past or your long ago past, I want you to hear so very clearly what King David says. Your lawless deeds are forgiven. Your sins are covered. The Lord will never count them against you.

such as what it means to be blessed. So we're in this courtroom. Paul is called Abraham and David. And if you understand Jewish law, the weight of testimony is given to two or three witnesses to establish the matter. Paul has called the greatest men from the Old Testament, Abraham and David, the patriarch and the king, the father and the model, they both testify the same thing.

[ 35 : 14 ] My friends, justification is by faith alone, apart from works. My case is air tight. So we've listened to the witnesses, we've heard the argument, now we look at the evidence of faith.

Let's take a look at verse 9. It says, is this blessing then only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised? Is this for the Jew or for the Gentile?

Can it be both? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised?

Well, we know it was not after, but before he was circumcised. It says he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he's still uncircumcised. Now, what does this all mean? Paul is anticipating a question. And the Jewish people in the court would be thinking, fine, Abraham. We agree, our Paul, Abraham was justified by faith.

[ 36 : 25 ] But, that can only apply to Jews, right? Because he's the father of the Jewish nation. Surely, that blessing is limited to the covenant sign of circumcision.

So, Paul retorts, is this blessing only for the circumcised or also for the uncircumcised? then he asks a very important question.

Was Abraham declared righteous before or after circumcision? If you do not know your Old Testament, he was declared righteous before circumcision, which occurred in Genesis 15. In Genesis 17 is when he is circumcised, which we know from history is at least 14 years later. So, the argument that the Jew would give doesn't pass.

Now, watch Paul's language here. He said, he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness he had by faith.

[ 37 : 35 ] It says that circumcision wasn't the cause of righteousness. It was the sign and seal of righteousness which was already received.

Think of a seal on a document. Right? The seal doesn't create the agreement, it authenticates it. You get me on that one, right? Circumcision was God's stamp of the covenant, not the means by which he was saved.

Now, why does this matter to us? Sometimes we do this with baptism. You're not saved until you're baptized.

Some people would teach you're not saved until you do communion, not saved until you do church membership. All these are signs and seals, but none of them actually cause justification.

You see, notice how Abraham says, or Paul says, Abraham was the father of all who believe. Abraham's justification before circumcision makes him the father of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles.

[ 38 : 50 ] And if you're in that courtroom that day and you're a Gentile and you're wondering, am I going to be second-class citizen? As soon as Paul spoke those words, I'm okay.

I'm okay. you don't need circumcision. Praise the Lord. You don't need to become Jewish. You simply need faith.

And if you have faith, Abraham is your father. For the Jews, Abraham shows that circumcision alone is meaningless.

And this would have been a radical teaching for them. What Paul does in this passage is he levels the playing field. All are equal before God.

Think of it, I have a wedding ring on my finger. Does this make me married? No, it doesn't. But it signifies that I am. Now, if I were to take this ring and give it to my son to wear, would that make him married?

[ 40 : 02 ] Not at all. Right? So that's why it's the same thing with circumcision or baptism or any other type of ritual.

Any ritual done without faith actually means nothing. It means nothing before God. Baptism, some think baptism makes them right with God, but baptism without faith is simply taking a bath in public. church attendance, some think sitting in pew secures favor, but church going without faith is just a waste of your Sunday morning.

Communion, some think taking the bread and cup imparts righteousness, but without faith it's just a quick snack and a very small drink. Some think that being born into a Christian family counts, but here's the thing, God has no grandchildren.

God only has children who are born by faith. None of these things makes you righteous, only faith does.

[ 41 : 15 ] The ritual is the sign, not the substance. Now I want you to notice the last statement that he makes in this text. Paul says, true children of Abraham walk in the footsteps of the faith.

those were the steps before circumcision. And here's the thing, faith isn't a one-time decision. Let's be honest, faith is a lifelong walk, amen?

It's every day, literally, Lord, help me with my day. Lord, give me faith, hold me tight. You see, Abraham kept walking, stumbling, calling, but he always moved forward by faith. So the question to ask yourself is, are you walking in Abraham's footsteps? Are you trusting God's promises even when they seem impossible? Are you clinging to faith rather than ritual? people? Why does this matter today? Paul has laid out the case. He's called the witnesses. [ 42 : 27 ] Abraham says, I was justified by faith before circumcision. David said, blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven. conviction. This evidence is airtight.

This verdict is clear. But what does that mean to you and I? And my friend, this is where we need to understand how the gospel explodes from this first century court setting and how it explodes into our own lives.

Now, there's four people I want to address with my conclusion this day. For those who do have a guilty conscience that you are walking in shame, that you are walking in here this morning carrying guilt.

The skeletons of your past haunt you. The shame of your present sin weighs you down. And you wonder if God could ever forgive me. I want you to hear what David said.

Blessed is the one whose lawless deeds are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Do you believe that? Do you believe that God can forgive one who's had an abortion?

[ 43 : 38 ] Do you believe that God can forgive someone who's had an addiction? Do you believe that God can forgive adultery, that God can forgive anger? If you're wondering, who's King David?

Committed adultery, murdered the woman's husband, and he sings this song about forgiveness. You see, justification doesn't depend on you cleaning yourself up. Justification depends on Christ's righteousness credited to you. And the good news is that God justifies the ungodly.

And if you can clearly say, I am ungodly, congratulations, you qualify. You're exactly the kind of person God justifies.

Now for you, who is the religious performer. Others of you walked in here feeling pretty good about yourself. You've kept your nose clean, you've got a strong religious resume, you've been faithful, you've given, you've served, but I want you to hear what Paul says.

[ 45 : 03 ] He says, if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. If Abraham couldn't boast, guess what?

You can't either. You see, religious pride is a deadly trap. It makes you think you're okay when you're not. It makes you compare yourself to others instead of God's law.

It blinds you to your need of grace. Religion without faith is like circumcision without faith.

It's an empty ritual. It's a sign without substance. I implore you, do not trust your works. Do not trust your rituals. Do not trust your heritage, but trust in God alone.

The third person that I want to address is what I call the weary believer. Some of you know the gospel, but you still live like it depends on you.

[ 46 : 13 ] You're constantly asking yourself, what more do I need to do to be more right with God? What more do I need to do to have more peace with God?

And you're constantly anxious, wondering if you've done enough. You feel like God's approval rises and falls with your performance.

To those that are here, I ask you to heed Paul's words. To the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Righteousness isn't wages for your work, it is a gift. A gift you didn't earn and a gift you cannot lose. That means you can breathe.

You can rest. We were just talking about this as pastors and Pastor Nanner uses examples, but when we see a beautiful sunset and we understand a great truth of God, we don't always need to say, how do I apply this sunset to my life?

[ 47 : 35 ] You know what you do? You sit down, put your feet up, and just praise God. Look at what God has provided me.

not only has He given me the sunset, but He's given me perfect righteousness with Jesus Christ. Enjoy it.

Enjoy your justification. You can stop trying to earn what God has already freely given you. accept the fact that the gavel has fallen, the verdict is in, your righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Amen? And the fourth person I want to address is the skeptic. The one who, hey, I don't believe in this stuff, but I'm kind of checking it out. I want to hear what Pastor BK or whoever else is at the

pulpit saying.

Maybe you're thinking this sounds way too easy. Surely God demands more. Surely I've got to prove myself. But this is what Paul's argument destroys.

[ 48 : 51 ] When you get a paycheck, do you call it a gift? No, because you earned it. If salvation is wages, then you'll never be able to pay enough.

But if salvation is a gift, then your only option is to receive it. You've heard this truth. And what this means is God is holding out the true and free offer of salvation to you today, right now.

Take it. It's free. Never forget that the justification by faith alone is scandalous.

It offends the moral person because it says your works are worthless. It offends the religious person because it says your rituals are meaningless. It offends the proud person because it says you contribute nothing.

But you know what it is? It is as glorious as a beautiful sunset because it means the door is wide open for sinners. sinners. It means there's hope for the hopeless.

[ 50 : 08 ] It means forgiveness for the guilty. It means rest for the weary. And it's simply the reason why Paul stakes everything on this. This is why Luther called it the doctrine by which the church stands or falls.

That's why Martin Lude Jones thundered that we are saved by faith, not because of faith. faith. And that's why Pastor John MacArthur hammers that faith is not righteousness itself but the channel of Christ righteousness.

Because if we get this wrong, we lose everything. Let us pray. Father, if there is any other day that is more perfect than our Canadian Thanksgiving to hear this clear news of the gospel, I can't think of what is.

Thank you, Lord. As Christians, just thank you for the gift of salvation that you freely give to us, that I didn't have to earn it, didn't have to work in it, didn't have to be from the right family.

I don't have to do the right rituals. I don't have to sing the right songs or dance the right dances. You freely give it.

[ 51 : 28 ] And all I need to do is believe to testify that you are indeed the Lord Jesus Christ. And if I confess my sins, you are faithful and just not only to forgive them, but you cover them up so that they are never counted against me.

Father, for those who resist this truth, I pray that you would break down those barriers. I ask that you would provide them with the answers to the questions that they hold dear. I know many people do not choose to follow Jesus because they want their own agenda.

They want to do their own thing. I ask the question to them, how's that working out? You still have to deal with the question of why is this world so messed up?

Guess what? You're in it and you're just as messed up as the world. How easy it is to point the fingers at the lawless deeds that go on in this world, but they exist in our own hearts.

We rebel, we fight, we get angry. angry. So here on this morning I pray that there would be a new soul prepared to give thanks for the salvation that they've received on this Thanksgiving weekend.

[ 52 : 58 ] And we ask you these things in your most holy and powerful name. Amen.