

Romans 4:1-5, ***"Works Won't Work"***

Romans 4:1-5, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Let's Look At Father Abraham, How Was He Save?

Introduction

"Have you ever been on a vacation? Raise your hand. Some of you are lying or you're not with it. How many of you have ever told the story, you're married, how many of you have ever told the story more than once of how you met your spouse? Ok, we're all sick of hearing it by the way. How many of you have repeated some little favorite story of what your kids did before, and you've repeated it again, you know, it's a favorite family story? Of course, I never do anything like that. How many of you have a favorite drink? You know, you get really thirsty, this is what you want to drink. Raise you hand. It might be water. This is like the gospel. Ok? You've taken a vacation more than once. You've told that love story more than one time, haven't you? You've had more than one drink of water, haven't you? Why?--because it's good, and you enjoy it. And you know where we are in the book of Romans right now, is a place where we're going to hear the love story of how our Lord met us. We're going to hear it again, we've heard it the last few weeks. But you know, I never get

tired of it. Do you? I never get tired of water when I'm really thirsty. I never get tired of kicking back and relaxing on a vacation. I never get tired of hearing how much God loves me. And so as we open our Bibles to Romans chapter 4, we're going to see again the story of how God loves us. You have to understand, the way the book of Romans is written, is that the first half of the book [Romans 1-8] is telling us what God has done for us. And then, the last half of the book talks to us about how we can respond to what God has done for us [which I added to the end of the last transcript to fully answer the question: "What About the Law?"]. Romans chapter 4, Paul has told us already his message that Christ has paid the price, he's redeemed us, he's declared us not guilty, and it's all been on the basis of his grace, through the gift of faith that he's given to us, and that plus nothing. Now not everybody buys that. Of course there are many people today, many religions, many even Christian groups, cultic groups, that teach that the gospel is what Jesus did plus something you do. That's one of the marks of a cult today. They always have a different gospel. It's not salvation by grace through faith plus nothing. It's always that plus something you add. In Paul's day, the Jews of his day had a very difficult time believing what Paul was saying. And one of the biggest reasons was because one of their national and religious heroes, they thought, had been saved by good works. Believe it or not, the Jewish writings from the time of the apostle Paul, taught that Abraham had gained a right standing with God because he was a good man, because he had done good things, because he was a righteous man. In fact, the Mishna says that Abraham was so good that he didn't even need to repent. And that he had obeyed God perfectly, and that's why God declared him righteous. And so the thought in Paul's day was, *'Well if it's good enough for Abraham, then it's good enough for me.'* You know, that was just the way it was. *'He's our hero, we are children of Abraham'* they claimed to be, *'So we're going to be saved the way Abraham was saved.'* And then Paul in a stroke of genius, gang, writes chapter 4, and what he does, is he takes the national and religious hero, Abraham, who's the one that they're saying is why they won't believe this gospel, because they say 'he was saved by good works'-he takes Abe, and he uses Abraham as an example and a proof that God has always saved people according to the gospel of grace. There's never, ever been a different way to save, and he uses their hero, Abraham, to prove his gospel, and I say--Awesome--it's probably one of the greatest gospel strategies ever recorded. It's classic, and I love it. And so he says, 'let's take Abraham as an example. Let's look at father Abraham. How was he saved? What did he learn about salvation? Let's see how he was saved. And he learns a couple things about Abraham. The first thing in **chapter 4 verse 1, "What shall we say, that Abraham our father according**

to the flesh is found, for if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. And what does the scripture say? And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” So he says, *‘Ok, let’s look at father Abraham. How was Abraham saved? Was it by grit, or was it by grace? Was it by works or was it by faith?’* And he uses Abraham now as a supreme illustration of salvation by grace. The first thing he says is, **‘Dear beloved Romans, Dear Jewish listeners’, Paul says, ‘I want you to know that Abraham was not saved by his works. Abraham was saved by faith, or belief.’** Verse 3 says, **“For what does the scripture say? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”** (verses 1-3)

Well What Did Abraham Believe?

Well what exactly did Abraham believe? Paul is quoting from **Genesis chapter 15**, where God says, **‘Don’t fear, Abe, your reward shall be very great, I’ll be a shield to you.’** Abraham says, **‘How can this be?’** And the Lord says, **‘Well, I’m going to give you a descendent. I’m going to give you seed, Abraham. And go out and count the stars if you’re able, because your descendants are going to be more than the stars of the sky.’** And Abraham says, **‘This is impossible Lord, because I don’t even have a natural heir yet, we can’t have children, we’re childless. And it looks like the heir of my house is going to be my servant, Eleazer from Damascus. And you’re telling me that I’m going to have descendants. Well it would be nice, Lord. Don’t you think I should start with one?’** And the Lord said, **‘Don’t worry about that, I can take care of that kind of stuff.’** And he began to tell Abraham more. He began to tell Abraham that his descendent, one particular descendent of his, would be the promised seed who would come and save the world. And then **verse 6 of chapter 15 of Genesis** says, **“Then Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”** And you say, *‘Well, Mark, it doesn’t say that he was pointed to Jesus and that’s what he believed.’* Well, what do you think he believed? It says, **“he believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”** What did he believe? I think that I can pretty clearly prove that he was believing in Jesus (Yeshua). You say, that’s impossible. No, just hang on a minute. But what I want you to know, it wasn’t, he

wasn't just believing in God, you know. Everybody believes in God. I mean, to be an atheist now isn't a popular thing. At one time it was. You know Madeline had a group of big supporters. It's sort of a thing that's dying out right now in the world. Now the big thing is to believe in God -- but who is God, what is God? Go to Sedona. You walk up to someone and they'll say *'I am God.'* Listen to some teachings today, they say *'you can be god's.'* Some say you are gods. Like, 90 percent of Americans believe in God, but you know, 90 percent of Americans don't know God. What does it mean to be a Christian? I talk to people, they come in, we sit down, we talk. I say, *'What kind of spiritual background do you have?'* They say, *'Well, we're Christian.'* And then they say *'But I really don't go to church that often.'* And I say, *'Oh, you go on Easter and Christmas?'* And they say, *'Yeah.'* And then I usually weave back around and say, *'What does it mean to you to be a Christian?'* *'Sort of an ethnic thing, you know? -- you're an American, so you're a Christian, you know?'* *'Yeah, I was born in America, I'm not a Buddhist. I don't follow some guru, you know, I'm a Christian.'* You know, most of us know a lot about Jesus, but it's sort of like knowing George Bush, I mean, who hasn't heard of George Bush. Better yet, who hasn't heard of Dan Quale. Bless his heart, he really does know the Lord, by the way. I mean, everybody, you say, *'You know President Bush?'* They say, *'Yeah, yeah.'* No, you don't know President Bush, you don't know him personally. And that's the way it is, people think because they know maybe a few Bible stories, or they know somehow you know, the Easter Bunny brought Jesus into the world, and ah, you know something about Santa Claus giving gifts to the world, you know they got it sort of a hodge-podge of stuff. *'Yeah, I know Jesus.'* No you don't -- no you don't, you don't know him personally. To be a Christian, to get into the kingdom of heaven, you've got to know God personally. Abraham just didn't believe God. He believed that God loved him, that God was sending Messiah into the world to die for him. That's what he believed. You say, *'Oh come on, Mark.'* Yeah, I mean, really. Look at Galatians chapter 3. Keep your finger here in Romans 4, go to the right to **Galatians chapter 3** and you'll see what I mean. And we'll look at **verse 13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law** [which was the death penalty attached to the law], **having become a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."** Why did he do it? **Verse 14** says, **"in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come onto"** -- who? -- **"the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."** **Verse 16, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed."** -- singular, very important, not seeds, all of his descendants, but to one distinct descendent. **"He does**

not say, 'and to seeds,' plural, as referring to many, but rather to one, **'and to your seed, that is Christ.'**” So the **seed** that Abraham was promised, that he believed in God about, that seed was Jesus Christ. Did Abraham know that? Yes. Abraham knew that. Look at John, the gospel of **John, chapter 8**. Jesus is talking to a group of people, and to Jewish people who had gathered around him, and he's saying, **'You know, if you just new the truth, if you knew me, you'd be free.'** And they got all knarly on him and they said, **'Wait a minute. WE are FREE. WE are ABRAHAM'S offspring. And we've NEVER been slaves to anyone.'** You know, you hear people like that today. These people forgot that for four hundred and thirty years, they were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. They forgot that right now their land is occupied by the Roman Army, and that they're basically slaves of Rome. *'Oh WE'RE free.'* You know, people don't like that when you tell them, 'You need Jesus, because he's the only way you can be free. *I live in America, I'm free! No one tells me what to do, I'm the captain of my own ship. I'm in control of my own destiny, I'm the pilot of my own aircraft.'* Wait a minute, you are enslaved. You're in slavery to the worst kind of slavery. To what? To yourself. That's the grossest kind of slavery, living for you, living for # 1, putting you before everybody else, that's a miserable slavery. Other people are in slavery to possessions, to material things. Some people are enslaved to the obvious things, drugs, alcohol, maybe a perverted kind of lifestyle, those are obvious slavery's. But Jesus said, **'If you'll come to me, I'll set you free.'** Have some of you Christians forgotten that you're free in Christ? Are you living *'free in Jesus Christ?'* Or does something have you in its grip? It could be an emotional thing. It could be something someone said you. *'Oh I just can't get it out of my mind, I can't get it out of my mind, can't get it out of my mind.'* Well, get your mind on **the Lord**. He'll set you free. It might be some habit, some thing that you're doing in your life that as a Christian you know it's wrong. Hey, don't you know there's power available [I talked a bit about that power right after the last transcript, how Jesus through the Holy Spirit **lives** the Law of God in our lives-it's that power available to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit--Jesus, Yeshua, in us! That's power over any sinful habits that may be enslaving us!] God's Spirit can give you power, and you can have victory in your life. [Just be sure to give God, Jesus credit for that victory when it comes.] You know, this Christian life is not just a bunch of yak. Paul says, **'I didn't just come to you and bring you a gospel in word only, but I also brought it to you in a demonstration of the Holy Spirit and of power.'** There's power. And I've seen, I just love to watch Jesus change lives. No man, no woman can change anybody's life, but I've seen Jesus do it. I've seen Jesus save marriages, I've seen Jesus

save physical life, people ready to take their own life -- and they come to Christ, whoa, their life changes. People headed into darkness, Jesus turns them around and now I tell you, they're just bouncing off the wall, they're rejoicing. I've seen people in very difficult circumstances, still serving God, and still praising him. There is freedom in Christ. [The Jews were saying in essence to Paul] **'We've never been slaves to anybody! We're Abraham's children!'** And Jesus says, **'Well, why don't you do what Abraham did. If you're Abraham's kids, why don't you act like your Dad?'** That's what he says in **verse 37, 'I know that you are Abraham's offspring, I know your genetics, I know your genealogy, yet, you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you? I speak the things which I have seen with my Father, and therefore you also do the things that you heard from your father.'** And they answered and said **'Abraham is our father!'** And Jesus said, **"If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of"** -- who? -- **"Abraham."** Well, what deeds did Abraham do? Look at **verse 56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was"** -- what? -- **"glad."** The Jews therefore said to him, **"You're not yet fifty years old, and you say that you have seen Abraham?"** -- **'Abraham lived thousands of years ago, you nut! And you say you've seen Abraham?'** No, he said, **'Abraham saw me, sorry to clarify.'** **'Come off it!'** **'Yeah, Abraham rejoiced to see me, he saw me coming, he saw my day, and he was glad.'** **'You're not even fifty years old, what are you talking about?'** **"And Jesus said, 'Before (next verse) Abraham was born I AM."** Strangely they knew what the Jehovah's Witnesses don't, that he was claiming to be God. I say that because this group of people that go around two by two knocking on your door, trying to sell you their magazine, their great slogan, their reason for being, is to tell you that Jesus is not God. I don't know what they do with this verse. He says, **"Before Abraham was born, I AM."** I am what?! **'I am'**, you see, it the name of God, from the book of Exodus. Did you know that? Look at Exodus. Keep your finger here, I'm not done. But look at Exodus [3:13-15]. Moses is about ready to, the Lord's going to use Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt, and Moses just asked the question, **'Well, this is great Lord, standing here at the burning bush with you, but ah, who should I say has sent me? What's your name?'** Exodus chapter 3, verse 13 and 14, **"Then Moses said to God, behold I'm going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them the God of your fathers has sent me to you. Now what if they say to me, Lord, 'What's his name?' What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, 'I AM who I AM', and he said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'"** Moving on, verse 15, **"And God furthermore said to Moses, 'Thus you shall**

say to the sons of Israel, **‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you, this is my name forever, and this is my memorial name unto all generations.’**” What is it gang, what's his name? I AM. It's not Jehovah? They should be called I AM's Witnesses, right? I mean, they make such a big deal about the name. *‘If you don't pray to Jehovah, you're praying to Satan’*, they say. Well, he didn't even say that was his name, he said **‘I AM is my name, and I should be known by this name throughout all your generations, this is my name forever.’** So you see the error [of the Jehovah's Witnesses] there, don't be deceived. And I need to point out the error, just like when the doctor tells you *‘there's flu going on, I want you to stay away from here and there, and maybe you need a flu shot or something.’* He warned you. He doesn't apologize for telling you that you could get sick if you expose yourself to something, so that's what I'm doing, trying to inoculate you here, so that you don't fall for this baloney. That's the Greek word for this false teaching, 'baloney', it comes from 'baloney'. OK, back then, in John chapter 8, who is Jesus claiming to be, when he says, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM.'? Every Jew there knew what he was doing, every Jew there knew what he was claiming, he was claiming to be who?!--God!-- Yahweh! And that's why in **verse 59 "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple."** **They** knew what he was claiming. They understood **absolutely**. So Abraham recognized that through his seed, through one of his singular descendants, Messiah would come, Messiah would be one of his seeds, Messiah would be God in the flesh, Messiah would die for him, rise from the dead. He understood that when he was on the mount with his son Isaac, and instead of his son being sacrificed, God provided a ram instead to take the place, he was being taught all about the gospel. He passed this on to his children. And so Abraham was saved the very same way we're saved, **by grace** -- God just choosing you, and you don't deserve it, God choosing you to be saved, through faith, and that is even a gift from God. And that was the way he was saved before Jesus came. And so a lot of us were sort of living--it's sort of like this--here's Jesus, the Christ event, when he came into the world--Abraham was just looking **forward** to Jesus who would die for us. Right? But he placed his faith in Jesus right then, in chapter 15, he put his faith in Christ. Here's Abraham with all his sins, he put his faith in Christ. And even though it was before Jesus came, God reckoned it or counted it to him as--what? -- righteousness. [And I might point out here, David was saved the very same way, and you can see many prophetic Messianic psalms showing David recognized the coming Messiah and how he would die. God actually prophesied

much of this through the Psalms he inspired David to write!] Now, me, here we are, two thousand years after this event, if we will place our faith in Jesus [and this faith also comes to us as a gift from God, as Paul has said in Ephesians 2], we will be saved in the very same way, and Jesus will reckon to our account, to count us to be righteous, he'll cover us with his perfection. And so, before the cross or after the cross, it's still, salvation is by the same way. They weren't saved by works in the Old Testament, and now we're saved by grace. We're saved by the same grace of God. The same faith like Abraham had. He believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. You see, going back to Romans chapter 4, you cannot earn a gift. If you say getting into the kingdom of heaven is something you are earning, no wonder you're so miserable as a Christian. No wonder you're miserable as a Christian. I know, I tried for years to earn my salvation. I tried and tried and tried to. What I thought I was doing was changing God's mind about me. Are some of you living that way? *'Oh I'm not in my Bible every day'*, but then when you're in your Bible every day, you think God's a little happier with you. *'I haven't prayed today'*, but the days you do pray, you think God's a little happier with you? Now, I'll tell you what, I'm a lot happier with you, I can sure tell the days when I've been in the Word, and I've spent time praying, and I bet you everybody who works around me can too. But it doesn't effect whatsoever my standing before God. I stand before God perfect all the time. And you see, when you understand that, it takes the heat off. It takes the pressure off, you can begin living a life that glorifies God. But some people, still, they think *'Well, no, no, no, no, I don't believe in shear works, but I believe that I do so much, OK, I do so much, you know, the ceiling is God's standard, I do so much, and Jesus makes up the rest.'* WRONG. Even the good stuff you do, God wouldn't let it in the door. It isn't good enough. It stinks, it's raunchy, **"all our righteousness is as filthy rags,"** as Scripture says.

God's Not Indebted To Any Man

Verse 4, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due." KJV "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." What would happen if you went to work, you get paid like on the 15th and the 30th, something like that, maybe. Do you get paid weekly? WEAKLY, [chuckle]. Doesn't matter when you get paid if it's like that, does it?

But let's say, your boss, your employer came to you, and it's the 30th, and he's going to give you your check, and he says 'Mark, I'm bringing you a gift, here's your gift' 'Oh thanks.' And there's your regular paycheck. You'd say 'You jerk.' 'What do you mean you gave me a gift, I earned this, I worked 40 hours, 50 hours, 60 hours (some of you for that), you're giving me.' Or it's Christmas time, 'Here's your Christmas bonus' and it's your regular check. You'd grumble and murmur, 'This guy has a dumb sense of humor, doesn't he?!' You see, when you work for something, then your employer becomes indebted to you and owes you something. Right? Now if you were working your way to heaven [or into the kingdom of heaven], that puts God in the place of being indebted to you or to me, and [then] God owes me now, for salvation? ***I'm sorry, God's not indebted to any man. God doesn't owe you anything.*** I mean, you watch the Olympics, who hasn't watched the Olympics. I never watch sports, but I've been glued to the Olympics at home, you know, up till midnight, watching the diving and the running, I mean, I don't even like some of the sports I'm watching. I don't know why I'm watching them. And you know, the moment they get that gold medal, what if someone said, "Now here's your gift"? -- "world class diver, here's your gift, the gold medal, here's a gift, a present." A gift, a present? They've been working, some of them, decades for this -- 15, 16, 18 years for this moment. They've ***earned*** that gold medal. Haven't they? It's not a gift. That they deserved and they earned. ***But the Bible says that eternal life is a gift. It's not a wage, it's not something we deserve or something we earn, it's a gift. And so a gift can only come by grace, through faith*** [and that faith, not of your own (Ephesians 2)]. [cf. ***Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."***] What are our wages? ***Romans 3:10-19, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."*** You say, 'Well, I just think I'll go with what I deserve, I'm going to earn my way, and I think my life has been pretty good, you know, I'm a Lodge member, I'm a moral man.' And you know, I know Lodge members that are

very moral people. Or maybe you say, 'Well, I'm not a Lodge member, but I've never done any of the Big ones, you know, no adultery, no stealing, never killed anybody, I just live by the golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' Bless your heart, don't you know, if you're going to ask God for what you deserve, you're going to get a check in the mail that looks like this. I don't know if you can read this, it's check 144,000, it's one of the last checks in the book, it's from Mount Zion Bank in New Jerusalem, ah, the signer on there is God, he's signed his signature on it, here it says, 'Pay to the order of sinner' and if you want what you deserve from God, if you want what you've earned, it's nothing, it's zero. See how many zero's will fit on the line? That's what you deserve. [I think Romans 6:23 was more to the point-*we all are sinners, we all deserve death.*] Nothing, absolutely nothing. You don't deserve to be in the kingdom of heaven, you don't deserve eternal life. You don't deserve anything. In fact, actually what you're going to get is written out, it says *eternal separation from God.* [no, actually in Romans 6:23, it says **death, "the wages of sin is death".**] There's a memo on the check. Ever write memo's? This memo says, **"Death."** Now this is what you're going to get in the mail. If that's what you want, you want what you deserve from God, here's your check. It's all signed, we got it ready for you, you can get it today at the end of the service. OK? Death, eternal separation from God, the Bible says, **"The wages of sin is death."** Here's your check. This is what I deserve, this is what you deserve, death, eternal separation from God. I don't want what I deserve. I don't want to be separated from God. Then what can I do? Then you can stop coming to God, asking for what you deserve, offering God your puny bit of works, and instead you can accept the work of his Son, Jesus Christ, in your place. It says, **"Abraham believed God" verse 3, "and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."** What is it? All of Jesus' goodness is reckoned to him as righteousness. I tell you friends, one of the greatest ways to show the gospel, is to get yourself some kind of a paper or something, and just show the gospel. I know some of you have seen it, it's OK, I'm not going to spend a long time on it, but, I'm mean, what happens when you believe is the Bible says **"God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us."** And Jesus knew no sin, right? Even his judge and jury said **"I find no fault in him."** They couldn't even pay witnesses to come up with stuff to come against him with because they couldn't even get their stories right. And so Jesus was acquitted and he was let go, but then they went ahead and executed him anyway -- he was acquitted, they dropped the charges, **"I find no fault in him"**, Pilate said. And they executed him anyway -- can you imagine what would happen in this country, what would the media do with something like that?

Let's say the Supreme Court acquits a man on death row, and yet they go ahead and flip the switch anyway. Oh, we'd want their hides, wouldn't we?! How dare they! *"The Court, the highest in the land, acquitted the man, and you flipped the switch anyway?! What right did you have!?"* And that's exactly what happened to Jesus Christ. Oh, was it a tragedy, was it mistake? No, God made him who knew no sin -- on that cross Jesus had all of your sins and my sins placed on him. That's the gospel. Now guys, as you share the gospel, this is the way you can do it. If all you have, the other day I looked in the garbage can for two pieces of paper, that's all I had. And I said, "Let this be Jesus and this be you, and I shared the gospel this way. In fact, now I've gotten really smart. How can you live the Christian life if you don't know this? How can you be a Christian (or Messianic believer) if you don't know this? So anyway, God placed all your sins on Jesus. And then he died and was buried. And what happened later, three days later, what happened? He rose from the dead. Where are your sins? Well they're not on him. Where'd they go? They've been blotted out. They've been paid for, they've been taken care of. Jesus on the cross, he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!" Why was he crying that? Because your sins were put on him. **Your** grossness was put on him, my bad deeds were put on him. That would make you cry out 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' too. That's why Jesus cried that out. And then on the cross, the last thing he said was **"It is finished."** Which, actually in the Greek he said **"Paid in full."** And he died. That's why when he rose again, your sins are nowhere to be found, they are not, you can't rake them up, they're gone. Because Jesus paid for your sins. Now if you accept Christ, you can have the righteousness of God in him, you come to Jesus Christ (Yeshua haMeschiach), here you are, and if you'll accept Christ (Messiah), the Bible says **"He that has the Son, has"** -- the what? -- **"life."** And you have Christ's life covering you. And you enter in Jesus' (Yeshua's) righteousness. And now when God looks at you, he doesn't see your sin, but he sees Jesus instead. Doesn't he? Not you, but Christ (Messiah). ***This is what makes us different from every other religion on earth. This transaction. It was reckoned to him as righteousness. God credits you, he puts to your heavenly bank account all the righteousness of Jesus Christ.*** Ever have the bank make a mistake? I know, once in a lifetime happening, but the bank sometimes makes a mistake. Sometimes you even **have** the deposit slip (ha, ha, ha!), and they didn't record it on your statement. And that's when I love to march in there, *'You made a mistake.'* You know, normally I make the mistake. *'You made a mistake, I have the receipt here.'* And then they have to credit your account with what they didn't put in. And

you get the slip in the mail, and it's different from the ones you're used to getting. *'This is a credit slip! All right! Frame it, it'll be the last time probably.'* Anyway, they made a transaction there, they switched money from one place to your account. You wonder, where did your \$50 go for that period of time, huh? Where did it go? Maybe there's a purgatory in the bank, you know. But anyway, it's been credited to your account. That's what happens when you accept Christ (Yeshua haMeschiach for Jewish believers) today. Jesus will credit all of his righteousness to you.

I Need To See Your Works To Know If There's Real Faith Going On

Verses 4-5, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned to the favor, but what is due, but to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for (or reckoned as) righteousness." Well someone says, *'Well, that's OK Mark, but you Christians, or you at that church, you're not reading the whole Bible. Because the Bible says that we are not justified by faith alone, but by works.'* I'm glad you brought that up, because I was thinking about that too this week. Let's look, the Bible does say that. Let's look at James chapter 2. **James chapter 2.** You come to a big book called Hebrews, and keep going, fly through Hebrews and you'll come to James, chapter 2. In James chapter 2, there is a verse that throws a lot of people, and every cult I know uses this to prove that you're not saved by what Jesus did alone, but that you have to join their group, and start doing their things, in order to **be** saved. And they use **verse 24, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."** *'So there! Rip up those crosses'* No, I'm not ready to rip them up yet, buddy. Let me tell you, you do err not knowing the Scripture. The problem that people make, the number one problem I see, is people taking a text out of context, and not reading -- why don't you read the verses around it? Why don't you read chapter 1 and 2 of James, and you'll understand. **He's not talking about how to get saved.** His whole point is he's writing a letter, he's a little unhappy with what's going on in the church. He's saying, **'Some of you, you get a rich man coming into your church, and boy, you escort him to the best chair in the place. You get a poor man in the church, you sit him in the back. You don't treat everybody alike. You're not taking care of the widows in your fellowship. You're saying,**

'Well if people don't have enough food, that's tough, I'm going to go and gorge myself.' He says, **'Wait a minute, how can you say you're Christians and live like that. You say you've got faith, show me your faith.'** And James' whole point, if you would take the time to read the first two chapters, is not how to get right in God's eyes, his point is how to get right in men's eyes. **Romans, Romans is all about how to get right with God.** [i.e. James is a book about Christian living, using the Law of God as a spiritual mirror --and the Holy Spirit's power within us to wash the dirt we see off of ourselves and out of our lives -- James 1:22-25.] In James, James is saying how to get right with men and women. In James, the point is, the world's looking at you, and the world is saying **'show me, that what you're saying is real.'** But God doesn't have to see you do something to know it's ["it's" = His Holy Spirit within you] real. Can't your God scan your heart? What kind of the God do you have? -- a God that doesn't know what's going on in your heart? You see God can see your faith, Boom, he sees it. But I can't see your faith. [And this faith is generated by the Holy Spirit's presence within a person -- and this Holy Spirit is invisibly glowing within a believer in Jesus, Yeshua. Demons and holy angels, and God can see the indwelling Holy Spirit. But the world can only judge us by our actions. You know the saying, actions speak louder than words? James is about Christian living, how a Christian is supposed to use the "Royal Law" as a spiritual mirror, and then use the "water & hyssop" of the Holy Spirit to wash the dirt away, creating a Holy Spirit empowered Christian lifestyle of obedience in faith. What is the God's definition of the new covenant? **Hebrews 8:6-10; Jeremiah 31:31-33--it is God writing his laws within the hearts and minds of believers in the church age, and then all of the collective Houses of Judah and Israel in the Millennial age to come.** But James brings out in James 2:14-26, that **if** you are a believer, your faith will be accompanied by the actions of obedience -- God, Holy Spirit enabled obedience -- that the whole non-believing world will be able to see.] **I have to see your works to know if there's real faith going on.** In Romans we have the roots of the whole thing--**how to be saved. But in James we have the fruits that comes from those roots.** How to stand before God, that's what Paul is talking about in Romans. How to stand before men, that's what James is talking about in the book of James. And so he's saying, **"Look, you tell me you have faith, show me your faith."** I mean, what if somebody got up and blabbed about how much they loved God, and how the Lord has the control of their life, and how wonderful this life in the Lord is, and then you watch them at work, and they're cussing and their swearing, and they're the most knarly person to be around. And everybody hates them. What would you think? You'd say, **'Look**

buddy, you keep your mouth shut, we don't need the Word, you show us by your deeds that that's real.' OK, that's what he's saying. James is talking about, **'Hey, a man is justified by works--that is in the sight of other men--and not by faith alone.'** I was talking to somebody this week. A guy was doing my upholstery. Just the neatest guy. Not my upholstery, he was cleaning my rug in my van. And I couldn't get the sand out of it, you know. And so this guy came and did a beautiful job. Just the nicest guy, and we were talking, and he says *'Hey, do you work at that church like Mike does?'* I said *'Yeah.'* I didn't want to tell him I was the pastor, because as soon as you say you're the pastor, people get weird on you, just totally weird out. Ever see that Star Trek show where there are these beautiful beings, and you think they are these beautiful beings until all of a sudden the beautifulness is a mirage, and actually they're these horrendous hideous looking things. It's like when you say you're a pastor, all of a sudden--ooh, gross, sick--or it's like they see a Martian, Oh -- you know, it's weird. So I try to hide the fact, I just try to hide it. And so we were doing fine, we were just talking and he says, *'You know, I'm not religious. I hope it doesn't bother you that I don't go to church?'* I said, *'No, doesn't bother me.'* *'But my wife's Catholic, she goes to church, once in a while.'* That's great, to have a Catholic in the family, you know. Awesome. And we were going along, like I say, he's a swell guy. I really liked the guy. Just talking, and we were communicating. And the point of all this, he said, he never said anything about the church *preaching the gospel, people getting saved, etc., or missionary outreach, all he says, "You know, the churches that I think are so neat are the churches like yours, they're out there, they're feeding people, helping people with their problems, you're there to provide food to people, I know you guys help with utilities for some of your people. That is so neat, that's what the church ought to do."* I mean, here's a guy by his own admission knows nothing about the church whatsoever. But he's judging us by our works. **You see the world looks at us and judges us by our works.** People at work looking at you, and you can blab your mouth off, but if you live a godly life, you work hard, you be fair and square, and I tell you, they're going to take notice. And then he asked *the* question. He says, *"Well, who is the pastor of that church?"* I said, *"I am."* Awwgh! Up until then I was a pretty nice guy. So, well, knowing the gospel, knowing that there's one way of salvation, it changes your life. I never get tired of hearing how I met my wife, or telling how I met her, going over that story, that love story one more time. I don't get tired of talking about my precious little kids, I don't get tired of that refreshing drink of water. And I never get tired of hearing the gospel. Now I need more than water to survive, right? But on a day like this, isn't water what you want [must have

been a hot day out in Arizona when this was being preached]. Great grace of God is so refreshing, it's like, aah, I can go out and live for the Lord, *'I really got excited Lord, to see again that you love me, not based on my Bible study, not based on my giving, not based on my sharing my faith, you just love me and you've accepted me just as I am.'*

In Closing, One Final Story

I want to tell you a story that Donald Barnhouse used to tell a lot, he was pastor of the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for years, and just a neat guy, and for years he had been witnessing to this fellow that lived down the street from the church. And the guy never wanted to have much to do with the gospel, *'he didn't need a church,'* he said, he didn't need religion, incidentally, he kept saying, because he's a member of a Lodge. And every time Barnhouse would try to share his need for Christ, he'd just sort of put him down and laugh. *'Well I don't need that, I live a moral life, I live according to our code of conduct, I'm right with God.'* Years went by, and one day, you know it happens to us here frequently, we get a word in the office, *'So and so is dying.'* One of us, several of us, drop everything and we're right there. Barnhouse got word that this fellow was dying and probably wouldn't make it through that day. Barnhouse arrived and there in the room, sitting in the room was one of the Lodge members, because according to the Lodge rules, you never let a brother Lodge member die by himself. I mean, that would be awful, to have to die by yourself. So here's the Lodge member sitting there at the foot of the bed reading a newspaper, a real comfort to the guy, but he's there, not alone, he's *'fulfilling the law.'* Barnhouse walked in just about the time the Lodge members were changing shifts and another one was coming in. And Barnhouse realized that the situation was desperate, and decided on a bold course of action, no time to be diplomatic, no time to mince words, he sat down by the bed, and this is what he said, he said: *"You don't mind me sitting here for a few minutes, do you, and watching you? I've wondered often times what it would be like for a person to die without Jesus Christ. And I've known you for a number of years, and you've always said that you don't need Christ and that your Lodge obligations are enough, so I'd just like to watch you end your life and see how it is for a person to die without Christ."* The man on the bed opened his eyes, took a gasp of air, and he pointed his finger at Barnhouse and he says "**You**

wouldn't mock a dying man, would you?!" And Barnhouse asked him the classic question, in fact, he coined the question, he says, "Well, buddy", he says, "if you were to die, and God were to ask you why he should let you into his kingdom, what would you say?" The old man there in the bed stared off into space for awhile, chin began to quiver, tear rolled down his eye and he said nothing. And then Barnhouse shared the gospel with him, how God will accept you right where you are. Maybe you're not on a bed dying, but you feel like you're flat on your back, and there's no way you could come to Jesus, there's nothing you could do that was by good works, you couldn't do a good work right now, your life is so messed up. Or you're so down, or you're so helpless, you need God so much, and you know it. You know what? You can come to Christ. God put all your sins on Jesus Christ. God did it loving you. And God will accept you right where you are, if you'll come to Christ, he'll put Jesus' righteousness on you today, and you can be saved like Abraham was. Works won't work. Faith in Christ, grace alone, that's all that can save you. I don't think it's a chance that you are here. Christians have come, they've come to be fed, to get built up in the Lord. Maybe you're not a Christian though you're an American, yes, but you really don't know Jesus. And it's not by chance that you came today, already, an hour and a half ago. Three people realized that it wasn't by chance that they came here today. They realized that it was actually a Divine appointment. Out of all the churches you could have gone to, where would you hear what would hit you right between the eyes? Where would you hear that God would accept you? I mean, just that you are at the right place at the right time, it's not a chance, it's God's appointment for you today. And Jesus said that if you will come to him, just as you are, he will accept you. He doesn't care who you came with, he doesn't care what your background is, he will accept you right now. You don't have to get better [on your own, through your own efforts -- which is works] -- **you can't get better till he comes into your life. You can't change until he begins to work a change in you.** But right now, he says, **"Come to Me, all you who are weary, you who are heavy laden, come to Me, and I'll give you rest."** If you come to Christ, Jesus says you need to believe in him. How do you do that? You ask him to be your Saviour, and you put your whole hope of heaven in Jesus Christ. What would happen to you if you died today? Where would you go? Are you sure you'd go to heaven? What are you going to do with the guilt that you feel? How are you getting the emptiness filled in your life? I tell you, what you need is Jesus. And you can come to him and he will give you eternal life, and if you died today, you would go to heaven. He will give you a fullness on the inside, he will give you freedom like we talked about earlier, he'll set you free. How do you come? You come by praying

and asking Jesus to be your savior. You say, *"I don't really know how to pray, I'm not a good pray-er."* Simple. When I pray, I just talk to God like I talk to a friend. We'll make it even more simple for you, I'm going to ask you to just pray after me. If you want your sins forgiven, if you want to know if you died tonight you'd go to heaven, and you want to have your sin and your guilt taken away, then you've got to ask Jesus to cover you with his righteousness. Have you ever done that? If you haven't you're not going to heaven. The only righteousness that will get you into the heavenly gates is this righteousness right here. I'm going to ask you to bow your head, pray a prayer with me, and ask Jesus into your life. Let's bow our heads. Father God, we thank you for your Word today, for the power of your Word, we thank you Lord that this isn't just a salvation message, this is a living message, Lord. And I need the gospel to get me through this week. I need to know your grace and your love all my life, Lord. Lord, help us as Christians to rightly divide your Word so we're not deceived. Help us Lord to see the power and experience that power of yours to set us free in our lives. Father, now I pray that you would grant faith to those that you are calling to yourself this minute Lord. That your Spirit now would just draw very close to them and draw them into the kingdom of heaven, in Jesus name, Amen. [Transcript by permission Calvary Community Church, Pastor J. Mark Martin, P.O. Box 39607, Phoenix, Arizona 85069.]

related link:

What is grace, and what place does the Law of God have in God's grace? see

<https://unityinchrist.com/whatisgrace/whatisgraceintro.htm>

The following is excerpted from Dr. Mark Eastman's *"Creation by Design"* and answers a vital question many non-believers have once they have seen God's existence in Scripture and seen his Word in Scripture proven beyond a doubt. Many may wonder, what next? What should I do with this vital information?

"How to Become a Christian" [4 steps]

First of all, you must recognize that you are a sinner. Realize that you have missed the mark. This is true of each of us. We have deliberately crossed the line, not once, but many times. The Bible says, "*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). This is a hard admission for many to make, but if we are not willing to hear the bad news, we cannot appreciate and respond to the *good news*.

Second, we must realize that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us. Because of sin, God had to take drastic measures to reach us. So He came to this earth and walked here as a man. But Jesus was more than just a good man. He was the God-man--God incarnate--and that is why His death on the cross is so significant.

At the cross, God Himself--in the person of Jesus Christ--took our place and bore our sins. He paid for them and purchased our redemption.

Third, we must repent of our sin. God has commanded men everywhere to repent. Acts 3:19 states, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*" What does this word *repent* mean? It means to change direction--to hang a U-turn on the road of life. It means to stop living the kind of life we led previously and start living the kind of life outlined in the pages of the Bible. Now we must change and be willing to make a break with the past. [I would like to point out here, that this initial repentance, U-turn, is not anywhere near the total life-change that Jesus will enable within you later on. This only comes after this next "fourth step", mentioned below. It is not really possible for humans to follow God's will, expressed by his perfect law of liberty, until after receiving Jesus Christ into one's life. That is why the saying, "Come as you" are is spoken so often by most pastors, in context with this understanding.]

Fourth, we must receive Jesus Christ (Yeshua haMeschiach for our Jewish readers) into our hearts and lives. Being a Christian (or Messianic believer) is having God Himself take residence in our lives. John 1:12 tells us, "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God.*" [Also

be sure to read John 14, where Jesus explains how He and the Father dwell within us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.] Jesus said, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.*" (Revelation 3:20). Each one of us must individually decide to open that door. How do we open it? Through prayer.

If you have never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, you can do it right now. Here is a suggested prayer you might even pray:

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and I am sorry for my sin. I turn and repent of my sins right now. Thank You for dying on the cross for me and paying the price for my sin. Please come into my heart and life right now. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to be Your disciple. Thank You for forgiving me and coming into my life. Thank You that I am now a child of Yours and that I will receive Eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

When you pray that prayer, God will respond. You have made the right decision--the decision that will impact how you spend eternity. In the meantime, find peace and the answers to your spiritual questions. [This website is loaded with answers. I.e. Who is Jesus?--log onto <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophecies/1stcoming.htm> .]

If you just became a Christian, it is recommended that you find a Christian church to fellowship and grow spiritually in. You are now part of the *body of Christ*. You are a young Christian needing spiritual food to grow on. Fellowshiping with other Christian brothers and sisters is also an essential part of the Christian's growth and life. It is therefore recommended that you find some evangelical Christian church (or Messianic congregation) that you feel comfortable attending."

[To learn more about making an intelligent choice about which Christian or Messianic congregation to attend, log onto

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/choosingachurch.htm>

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