

FOR HEAVEN

Righteousness Is Required!

Are YOU Righteous? Are You SURE of Heaven?

Saturday, 3/7 at 4:00 ✦ Sunday, 3/8 at 9:00

Second Sunday in Lent – 2020

Lenten Wednesdays: Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: With each of the following statements, which part is MORE important?

- ✦ Your health **or** going to heaven when you die?
- ✦ Your money **or** going to heaven when you die?

Health and money are important; however, *nothing is more important than going to heaven when we die!*

We definitely want to go to heaven, so what is required?
God's requirement is righteousness! What does that mean?

These statements come from The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) on the term *righteousness*:

- ✦ Righteousness “cannot be achieved by way of law (Gal. 2:21 [Rom. 3:10; 3:20]). Salvation is by divine mercy.”
- ✦ “God’s righteousness means justification.... God’s judgment achieves this by [forgiveness].... The justified are ‘right’ before God” (173, abridged in one volume).

In other words, *God requires us to be right in His sight, but* we are helpless to meet that standard. Therefore, *God shows us mercy by forgiving us through Jesus*, thus making us ✦right in His sight and ✦ready to go to heaven when we die.

We now turn to **Romans chapter 4** to learn more about ✦God’s gift of righteousness and ✦being sure of heaven.

1. **Abraham and His Works:** ¹ What then shall we say was gained [lit. found] by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. // What were two of Abraham's significant works? God said...

- a. Leave your family and your nation: Genesis 12 – When the LORD called Abram to leave his family and nation, *he was 75 years old, nevertheless, he obeyed!*
- b. Offer your son as a burnt offering: Genesis 22 – God said: “Take your son, your only son Isaac... and offer him... as a burnt offering...” (v. 2 ESV). That is horrible and made no sense, *yet Abraham obeyed!* However, *his obedience did not save him!* Like us he was a sinner; *no amount of good can cancel out our sin* 😊!

2. **Two Examples of Faith:**

- a. Abraham: ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted [credited] to him as righteousness.” // Kretzmann: “The miracle of the Gospel is that God comes to the ungodly... and enables them through faith, in spite of what they are [sinners], to enter into a new relation to Himself... The act of justification... has nothing to do with the moral character of those concerned.” We may think: Our sins are too great, *yet for us to be counted righteous is 0% us and 100% God!* Two opposites:

- i. I did it: ⁴ Now to the one [working] [an ongoing action], his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. // I worked, so I deserve my paycheck!
- ii. God did it: ⁵ [But] to the one not [working] but [believing] in [the one justifying] the ungodly, his faith is counted [credited] as righteousness... // God

took action to provide our righteousness through Jesus; **then** ▶ He gave us the benefits in baptism, and **now** ▶ He is keeping us trusting in Jesus!

- b. David: Paul continued his letter to the Romans by referring to David; he wrote: ⁶ **just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:**
- i. ⁷ **“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; // Forgiven and covered – *both mean the same thing!*”**
 - ii. ⁸ **blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not [*οὐ μὴ*, literally – *by no means*] **count his sin.”** ... // We all have sins, they all deserve to be counted, and we all deserve to be condemned, **BUT** God through Jesus does **NOT** count our sins☺! Kretzmann and Luthardt: **“The consequences of sin may still be present, but the Lord’s forgiveness covers it up before His own eyes, ‘making it... just as if it had not happened. ...Paul understands justification... as acceptableness of man in the eyes of God in spite of the absence of a corresponding moral quality.”****
3. **God’s Promises are Based on Faith:** ¹³ **For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law** [*thus, because he obeyed the law*] **but through the righteousness of faith** [*thus, because of His God-given faith*]. ¹⁴ **For if it is the adherents [keepers] of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null** [*has been emptied, made void*] **and the promise is void** [*has been brought to nothing, abolished*]. ¹⁵ **For the law brings [produces] wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.** // Kretzmann: **“The Law... demands perfect**

obedience and condemns all that are not perfect.” So from Adam all were condemned! Therefore, salvation has always been by faith! When Adam sinned, the Savior was promised; by faith Adam and Eve were saved! Abraham, David, us, and others are all saved by faith in Jesus!

4. **God’s Promises are Sure:** ¹⁶ **That is why** [being an heir of Abraham] **depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring** [those in Abraham’s family by faith (see Romans 9:8)]-- **not only to the adherent** [keeper] **of the** [Mosaic] **law** [regarding, for example, circumcision] **but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,** ¹⁷ **as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”-- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, [giving] life to the** [spiritually] **dead and [calling] into existence the things that do not exist.** // God declared Abraham righteous BEFORE he was circumcised, *making him the father of all believers!* Because our righteousness rests on **JESUS’ FINISHED WORK,** *we have the assurance of heaven!* Righteousness, *the very thing we need for heaven,* God has promised **“without the slightest consideration of... the works of men, in order that the promise of salvation might be sure and certain...”**

This Week’s Challenge: Since our works cannot save or make us sure, let us gladly trust in Jesus and be certain of heaven!

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, You know we are so tempted to put some trust in ourselves for heaven; however, help us to trust ONLY in Jesus and rejoice in Your GIFT of righteousness!

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