

**ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**  
**"Part VII: The Salvation Of Pre-Christianity' People"**  
**(Romans 4:1-25)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

When we see from Romans 3:23-30 that men are pronounced righteous by God **ONLY** by faith **ALONE** in Jesus Christ, the question often arises: "What about people who lived centuries **before** anyone *knew* about Jesus -- how could **they** be saved?!"

(1) The question is critical, because it brings up a related question on the **credibility** of the Christian **faith**: **If no one BEFORE Christ might have qualified to be saved because they didn't KNOW about Jesus, HOW could the CHRISTIAN faith be TRULY the faith of the CREATOR and God of all HISTORY?**

(2) Another related concern is the charge some theologians have made against those of us "dispensationalists" who believe God's workings with Israel under the Law were different than with us in the Church era:

(a) John W. Bowman wrote in Interpretation, April, 56, p. 178 ("The Bible and Modern Religions: II, Dispensationalism") in criticism of dispensationalism, saying, ". . . If any man is saved in any dispensation other than those of Promise and Grace, he is saved by *works* and not by faith! [The dispensationalist] is clearly left with two methods of salvation on his hands, *faith* for the rest -- and we have . . . to deal with a fickle God who deals with man in various ways at various times." (cited in Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, p. 110)

(b) Clarence B. Bass (Backgrounds to Dispensationalism, p. 34) also charged in 1960 that the view of us dispensationalists who make a distinction between Israel and the Church ". . . when carried to its logical conclusion, will inevitably result in a multiple form of salvation -- that men are not saved the same way in all ages." (Ibid., Ryrie, p. 111)

Well, what about Old Testament saints like Abraham, Moses and king David -- were they saved by grace or by works since they didn't know about Jesus Christ?

If they were saved by faith alone, didn't they have a different Gospel since they didn't know about Jesus, and wouldn't that conflict with Paul's teaching we are saved by faith alone?

And, if Old Testament saints were not saved by faith in Christ, why is faith alone in Christ right for salvation TODAY?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

***Need: "If as the Apostle Paul teaches in Romans 3 one is saved from hell ONLY by faith ALONE in Christ ALONE, how could those living BEFORE they COULD have KNOWN about Christ EVER enter heaven? Thus, how can Christianity be the TRUE faith if it doesn't handle the spiritual need of man THROUGHOUT history?!"***

- I. **Paul knew his Hebrew countrymen might respond to his claim that one enters heaven only by faith in Jesus Christ by asking how their patriarch, ABRAHAM could have been saved since he did not know about Jesus, Romans 4:1-2.**
- II. **Hence, Paul revealed from Scripture JUST HOW the Christian faith is an ESSENTIAL role in the Creator God's salvation PLAN:**
  - A. In Romans 3:25a, Paul stated Christ's atonement for sin covered the sins of all humans who had lived before Jesus' era.
  - B. This fact can be illustrated by our viewing even the *earliest* parts of Scripture: there we see God's **FOCUS** upon Christ's death *for* sin:
    1. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, God implied that He anticipated a solution for their sin as follows:
      - a. **Though** God did not permit man to eat of the Tree of Life after he sinned, He did **not destroy** that tree; rather, He barred man from access to it by placing a flaming sword around the tree as an implied **hope** of restoring man's access to it, Gen. 3:22-24.
      - b. Indeed, this **hope** will be **fulfilled** at the end of time when the Tree of Life appears in heaven for all **justified** men, Rev. 22:2.
    2. The solution for man's sin is implied in the **way** God **clothed** fallen man: following their sin, God supplied Adam and Eve with animal skins, Genesis 3:21. Some animals then substitutionally died in their behalf, prefiguring Jesus, the Lamb of God, dying in man's place that man might stand acceptable to God as clothed in Christ's righteousness, John 1:29; Bible Know. Com., O.T., p. 33.
  - C. Well, though the Old Testament saints were **ignorant** of Christ's substitutionary death for them, Paul revealed **HOW** they were justified by **faith alone** based on Christ's death as **we** are **today**:
    1. Paul notes that Abraham, who lived **before** the Mosaic Law era, was justified by faith alone in God's revelation to him, 4:3-5, 9-22:
      - a. Citing Genesis 15:6, Paul proved that Abraham was justified by faith, meaning it was by God's grace, Romans 4:3-5.

- b. Now, this justification occurred **before** Abraham became a **Hebrew** by the rite of *circumcision*, Romans 4:9-12: Paul shows that since Abraham was circumcised in Genesis 17:1-27 [along with his thirteen year old son, Ishmael,] but that he was justified in Genesis 15:6 [when he was still *childless* (Gen. 15:2)], he was justified **before** *circumcision* to be a *Hebrew*.
  - c. Thus, in Abraham, God set the pattern of justification by faith alone, for Abraham was justified not only before the Law, but before being **circumcised** out of *paganism*, 4:13-15 (Jos. 24:2)!
  - d. Paul states this Abrahamic precedent established by God patterns God's justifying *all* men by faith alone, Rom. 4:16-22.
2. Thus, God had Abraham's account **recorded** in Scripture to encourage **US** that He would save **ANY of US** by faith as **WELL**:
- a. Paul noted Abraham's justification before circumcision and the Mosaic Law was recorded in part for **our** benefit, Rom. 4:23f.
  - b. **OUR** benefit from this record is the benefit of **precedent** regarding how **we** are justified: (a) if God justified Abraham as an uncircumcised "**pagan**" by **faith alone**, and that through anticipating Christ's death for "pagan" Abraham's sin (Rom. 3:25), there is hope that **we**, Hebrew or Gentile, can also be justified by faith alone **along with "pagan" Abraham**, Rom. 3:24b. (b) When we then put our faith in Christ who died, was buried and rose for us, trusting that His resurrection indicates God is pleased with His sacrifice, we are to be confident that we are saved by faith alone as was "pagan" Abraham, Rom. 3:25!
3. Besides, even **under** the *Mosaic Law*, king David wrote about having God's righteousness imputed to him **without** works, Rom. 4:6-8 which quotes David's writing of Psalm 32:1-2.

***Application:*** (1) *If we have not done so, we must believe on Christ's death for sin to be saved, 1 Cor. 15:1-11.* (2) *Then, REST in the fact that this Gospel is not a new, errant cult, but part of the plan of the Creator God of HISTORY so that the Christian faith is TRUE!* (3) *Then, proclaim Christ's Gospel with confidence in its validity!*

***Lesson:*** (1) *Though the CONTENT of what men have BELIEVED to be saved has changed over time, and that ONLY due to the TIME it has taken for God to reveal His redemption to SPIRITUALLY NEEDY man,* (2) *salvation has (a) ALWAYS been, and (b) WILL ALWAYS be (c) by faith alone (d) in God's Word alone (e) as based on Christ's death!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

We can show from the Bible that salvation always has been, always is and always will be by faith alone in God and His Word though the **content** of that Word may differ in different eras due to God's progressive revelation to finite man, and that salvation is always based upon the blood of Christ (as follows):

- (1) **Before** the Mosaic Law, in Genesis 15:5-6, Abraham was **justified** by **faith alone** in believing God's Word *that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars for his not being able to number them*. He was justified based upon God's foresight of Christ's death for his sin, Romans 3:25.
- (2) **Under** the Mosaic Law, according to Psalm 32:1-2, David was **justified** by **faith alone** in stating that God did not impute his sins **apart from works**, but that God instead imputes righteousness without such works, Romans 4:6-8. David's justification was based upon God's foresight of Christ's death for his sin as well, Romans 3:25.
- (3) In the **Church** era, the believer is justified by faith alone in **Christ's death and resurrection** alone apart from works, Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.
- (4) But, even **after** the Church has been taken by God to heaven, and men are left on the earth in the Great Tribulation, people will be justified by God as follows: they will have their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb of God, a reference to **salvation by Christ's atonement**, Revelation 7:14-15. They will have been justified by **believing** in the **everlasting** Gospel to be preached at that time, Revelation 14:6-7.

**Thus, "The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ: the requirement for salvation in every age is faith; the object of faith in every age is God; [ONLY] the content of what is to be believed changes in the various dispensations."** (Ibid., Ryrie, p. 123) **The basis of salvation stands the same though the content of revelation has changed due to God's progressive revelation of His eternal plan to finite man.**