

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

THE ORIGINAL BIBLICAL GOSPEL—*RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH*

— ROMANS 4 (Part THREE of a series) — *THE SCANDAL OF JUSTIFYING UNGODLY SINNERS*

THEME: PAUL'S TEACHING IS NOT NEW THEOLOGY, IT'S THE TEACHING OF THE JEWISH OLD TESTAMENT. PLEASE READ Romans 4:1–8.

COMMENT: Paul argues against the Jewish legalists by showing that what he taught about the Gospel was the teaching of the Old Testament. He gives two examples: Abraham, who believed God and whose faith was credited with righteousness, and adulterous David, whose transgressions were forgiven and sins covered.

A bombshell text is Romans 4:4, which declares that God justifies the wicked or the ungodly. This is probably the most scandalous text in the Bible. The Jews taught that God justifies the righteous. God says He justifies the wicked. He declares righteous the penitent sinner. Read it and wonder at grace.

No wonder the Pharisees who taught that salvation was only for the upright and righteous were outraged. Paul was teaching what they thought was a new dangerous theology, and they wanted him dead. They damned him for teaching "THE NEW THEOLOGY." They never gave up plotting his murder. Religious Perfectionists and Legalists have done and continue to do the worst sins. Because they are blind.



The Gospel teaches that God declares righteous the penitent ungodly sinner. We are all ungodly, but some are penitent and crying out for mercy, while others are self-righteous and hard as stone and cold as ice. JUSTIFY MEANS TO DECLARE RIGHTEOUS. IT IS NOT A PROCESS. IT IS THE WORK OF A MOMENT. Mother Teresa, taught by the Jesuits, thought it was a process. *“Bit by bit, little by little, I am getting more righteous every day. I hope I am good enough when death comes knocking.”*

The one true Gospel is a revolution, but it is not new; it is taught in the Old Testament. *“Abraham believed God, and it was CREDITED to him as RIGHTEOUSNESS.”* See Romans 4:3. If it is true, it is seldom new, and if it is new, it is seldom true. When a penitent sinner trusts in Christ for salvation, God credits him with perfect righteousness. In a moment of time. Overwhelming. Astounding. But true. Because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross for the sin of the world. Amazing.

The saved sinner is a penitent, hating his sin and turning from it as God works a miracle of transforming grace. Hard hearts become soft, bitter people become sweet, dirty people become clean, and self-righteous bigots become kind and humble. All this is not the merit of salvation, but the fruit of it. Theologians call it SANCTIFICATION. It is never 100% in this lifetime. Like Jacob, who struggled with the Angel, we are limping and falling and crying and laughing and rising as we travel down life’s pathway. But God **counts** all our imperfect efforts as 100% righteousness. Justification is the umbrella that keeps us safe and dry in the storm. JUSTIFICATION IS 100% all the time. Our inner holiness is much, much less. HOW MANY PERFECT PEOPLE DO YOU KNOW? Unless we have a divine revelation, we won’t get it. See Galatians 1:12. THOSE WHO DO GET IT GROW INTO NICE PEOPLE, not bitter old cantankerous critical religionists who turn young people off God.

