

# "How to Enjoy the Bible"

Week #7 January 17, 2016 - "Sola Gratia"

*"Abraham, Our Example"*

## Review

- ***Our focus has been in this series on Sunday Morning:***
  - ***Regarding the inspiration of God's revealed word - SOLA SCRIPTURA***
  - ***Regarding a proper study of the word of truth, that is, on gaining a proper interpretation of God's word***
  
- ***Coverdale's list of questions regarding the taking of God's Word literally unless there is a very good reason not to do so***
  
- ***The scriptures we have considered so far in applying Coverdale's Principles have included:***
  - ***Luke 18 / Num. 15 / Lev. 24: A rich young ruler seeks eternal life but cannot find it, a man violates the Sabbath Law and suffers the full judgment due to a Moses Law breaker, and, a man takes the name of the Lord in vain and also suffers the capital punishment dictated by that law***
  - ***Rom. 3 & 6: No works of law can produce justification, rather, all law or legal principle enables sin to dominate us***
  - ***Gal. 2, 3 and 5: Faith, not works of law, brings justification, and, in fact, there can be no justification by law before God since legal works always short-circuit grace!!***

***Under grace, the apostle writes, no salvation can be gained through works of law since law and grace are opposing principles. Legal principles, law, always includes BOTH a***

***positive and a negative. If ... obedience ... then blessing ... if ... disobedience ... then ... judgment.***

***We learned, therefore, I trust, from these scriptures that mixing the Mosaic Law (or even the Law of the Kingdom) with grace causes, at the very best, some very serious confusion.***

***In our last two meetings we looked at Romans 3 - 5. My goal there was to show what scripture says regarding "justification", one of the key words of scripture considered so far. The point was that enjoyment of the Bible and of the Lord really does require an understanding of basic Bible doctrine such as regarding God's grace in salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The latter is summarized by the apostle Paul with the word "justification" in our English Bibles, and, as we have clearly seen, personal faith is at the heart of this redemptive plan of almighty God.***

***In these chapters of this great letter to the Romans, Paul underscores the Reformation key truth of Justification by faith alone, independently of any and all works. 500 years ago they used the Latin words "SOLA FIDES" to summarize this Biblical truth. We use the English words "FAITH ALONE" today. This is ever so critical for our understanding of how God is working today, is it not?***

***Today we will consider some additional key verses specifically in Romans 4 that underscore the connection between the SOLA FIDES and the GRACE OF GOD, or in the Latin, the doctrine of SOLA GRATIA.***

***So our subject today is: SOLA GRATIA - "Abraham, Our Example"***

**Our Scriptures for Today (let's read them first)**

**[READ ] Rom. 4:1-5 "For Abraham, Works and Grace were Opposing Principles"**

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

**[READ ] "Our Full and Complete Salvation Demands a Faith Like Abraham's"**

14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

**[READ ] Rom. 4:19-22 "Sovereign Grace, as Seen in Abraham's Faith, Saves Absolutely"**

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

### **NOTES ON THESE VERSES TO GUIDE OUR DISCUSSION:**

#### ***I. Rom. 4:1-5 “For Abraham, Works and Grace were Opposing Principles”***

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

**5 *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.***

- ***These are strong verses implying both the inspiration and perfection of scripture, SINCE HERE PAUL APPEALS TO A SHORT VERSE IN GENESIS CHAPTER 15 AND UPON THIS AND ITS PROPER INTERPRETATION SO MUCH DEPENDS, DOES IT NOT?***

- ***Here it is Gen. 15 that is quoted:***
  - ***Gen 15:6 “And he believed [in] the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”***

- **Notice WHAT he believed:**
  - **Gen 15:4-5**

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD [came] unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.
- **So he believed God when he said that his offspring would be great!**
- **Verse 4 draws the greatest of distinctions between law's rewards and grace's free gift.**
- **Verse 5 brings us the bold statement that anyone NOT working and WITHOUT WORKS who nevertheless believes as Abraham did will surely have the righteousness of God and Christ imputed to his account.**
  - **Imputed means reckoned, an accounting term!! IT MEANS TO CREDIT TO ONE'S ACCOUNT!**
  - **NOW some might consider this teaching to be "cerebral" and rather boring, while others have had their lives changed forever by it (Martin Luther, for example, and the Reformers).**
  - **What about us?**

**Your thoughts?**

**II. Rom. 4:14-16 "Our Full and Complete Salvation Demands a Faith Like Abraham's"**

**14** For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

**15** Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

**16** Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

- ***Verses 14 and 15 continue this contrast between LAW and GRACE.***
  - ***Transgressions are inevitable when there is an applicable law***
  - ***And transgressions engender wrath***
  - ***So, “the law works wrath”, says the Apostle.***
  - ***This is a deep and profoundly important truth. Do we understand it?***
  
- ***Verse 16 is the focal point though:***
  - ***The purpose of God is revealed here***
  - ***The essence of saving faith is underscored here - without faith (meaning, taking God at his word, as Abraham did) there can be no true salvation.***
  - ***So, the relevance of this for our enjoyment of our salvation and this word of truth, the Bible, is made clear***
  - ***Verse 16, if only we would believe it, would resolve all the issues we might have concerning our daily lives with all of our troubles, even troubles leading to the trials listed in chapter 8. Even those!***
  
  - ***So, our own works are prohibited in the context of saving faith, not demanded as all religions teach.***

***Your thoughts? Any testimonies?***

**III. Rom. 4:19-22 “Sovereign Grace, as Seen in Abraham’s Faith, Saves Absolutely”**

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

- ***These verses are a fitting place to end because the focus here is on faith, specifically Abraham’s.***
  - ***This all goes back to Gen. 15, doesn’t it?***
  - ***As verse 3 above states it, “Abraham believed God.” Note that it does not say Abraham believed “in” God. Oh, well, our translations say that, unfortunately. But a better translation of the original Greek would be this: “Abraham believed in reference to Jehovah God” (compare Num 14:11; Num 20:12; Deu 1:32, and, of course, Rom 4:5, “believe on him”)***
  - ***What it does say is that Abraham believed God, that is, he believed what God said, what God had promised to him.***
  - ***This not “believing in God”, no, not at all. It is so much more that that such that there is no comparison at all.***
  - ***Many never get beyond believing in God (that he exists) or trusting in God and they hope that the key to being a Christian is simply trusting God more and more in some***

***kind of empty way without any real content. This opens the door to mysticism and all kinds of religions practices, none of which are taught here in these scriptures.***

- ***Abraham is set forth here as our example of how God works.***
  - ***He reveals how he is working and makes certain promises to us personally in his word.***
  - ***But the key is to know what is written specifically to us and for us.***
  - ***Abraham is an excellent example because of what Gen. 15 states so clearly about him.***
  - ***Imagine what would have happened if Abraham had failed to believe what God had promised! What was that, by the way?***
- ***Finally, verse 21 speaks of righteousness being imputed or reckoned to Abraham's account simply on the basis of his faith -- nothing else!***
  - ***So no works of righteousness were involved here . . . all was based on Abraham's faith (his believing of what God had promised to him).***

***Let's finish today by reading the closing verses of this chapter.***

***Please turn with me to the final verses in this chapter 4:***

***Rom. 4:23-25***

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

***This is the gospel of grace in a nutshell, as it were!***

***This reckoning of Christ's righteousness to our accounts is JUSTIFICATION! And it is entirely granted to us freely and on the basis of our faith. This is what unbounded grace is all about! SOLA GRATIA.***

***Your thoughts on how this might relate to our own salvation and to our enjoyment of God's salvation under grace and our own enjoyment of the Bible.***

***Taking God at his word is so blessed! Will we take him quite literally at his word? That is the question. Amen.***