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What we want to do as we resume is make sure that we let Scripture speak to us on the subject of inheritance because one of the things that can throw us a little bit off track is to misunderstand inheritance and we sometimes think or hear taught that the passages, for example in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3 that says, to him that overcomes I will grant, that these are things that are automatically the inheritance of all believers and this was a good try at interpretation because there is a passage over in John's epistles that says this is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith and by connecting the fact that John wrote both passages people have said well all believers are overcomers. Unfortunately that is not the case and the passages that we're going to examine here briefly tonight just in regard to inheritance will bring out that fact. What I'd like to do and we don't have time to do an exhaustive study but let's just look at a few passages.

Let's start back again in Galatians chapter 3. We looked at Galatians 3 a little bit earlier but I'd like to look a little further in the chapter now beginning in verse 26. In Galatians 3 26 Paul says you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. This is a statement of positional truth.

Everyone who expresses faith in Christ Jesus is a son of God. That is a positional truth. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Now some translations in verse 29 say if you belong to Christ.

This has the idea of possession in a lot of English translations but we have to make a decision when we come to verse 29 because this is a noun which is actually a pronoun, you, followed by the genitive of Christ. And the genitive, there's no word for belong or possessed or anything else. It just says if you are of Christ literally.

So does of Christ mean belonging to Christ, being like Christ? This is the decision that we have to make based on the context. And because of not only our study of Galatians in the past but also the consistent teaching that Paul presents in this regard, this is talking about something that takes place after our salvation. Remember when Jesus was talking to the disciples and he said he was talking about righteousness and he said the Pharisees pray on the street corners and they love to be seen by men and they drop their money bags in in public and so forth.

But you, when you do your alms, do them in secret. Do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. And when you pray, do it in your closet and so forth.

And he said for your father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Now that's a statement of this same principle in an Old Testament context. We always remind ourselves that Jesus was teaching and preaching in the age of Israel.

And the Beatitudes and the parables and many of the things that he taught, the illustrations that he gave, the parables, teach Old Testament truth to Old Testament saints. And many of the principles are consistent throughout the ages and we can make application of those principles to ourselves. But it's a very valuable aid in interpreting the life of Christ to remember that he is in the age of Israel.

He's under the law and he's talking to Jewish believers in many cases where he's teaching. And those principles apply specifically there. And this gives us great insight when we start looking at some of the inheritance parables that Jesus taught.

But here, well, we remember that Jesus said that he was talking to the disciples and he said, when you do these things, then you will be sons of your father in heaven. Well, it's sort of an oxymoron because he says you will be sons of your father by calling God their father. He's saying you are already sons, but you will be sons indeed.

You will be sons in the full true sense of the word. And this is what takes us beyond positional truth and into experiential truth, past the positional imputation of righteousness at the point of salvation and being declared righteous by God on a daily basis. God says when you stop trying to impress people with your righteousness, when you stop trying to use a human standard to evaluate your righteousness and be content that when you do express faith in God and when God does declare you righteous in secret, that reward is yours.

There is a reward associated with the obedience of faith. Jesus expressed it when he was talking to the disciples. Paul expresses it here.

If you are of Christ, if you express faith in Christ after salvation, living faith, daily faith, letting the truth of the word of God, which is the mind of Christ, be the reality that forms our priorities, that influences our decisions, that causes us to not worry, to not fret, to not set human goals and so forth. If you are of Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. This is the principle that we're seeing in Romans, that living faith qualifies us to be heirs according to the promise.

This is not heirs of eternal life. This is the promise of blessing, the promise of reward, the promise of opportunity. And we have to sort of deal with the issue of, well, am I going to have a mercenary attitude if I say, well, I want to be rewarded by God? I want to be in a position.

Why does God even talk about rewards? It seems kind of an uncomfortable subject. It would be better if we had faith in God out of a selfless devotion and response to his love and we didn't worry about rewards. But the great thing about this is it's sort of like the, some of us have been in the military or have had close family members in the military, and you think about the ribbon that someone is awarded for faithful service of some sort or heroic action of some sort.

The ribbon itself doesn't have a lot of intrinsic value. It's a piece of ribbon wrapped around a piece

of tin with a clasp. But it's what it symbolizes and it goes in two different directions.

It recognizes that this individual has distinguished himself in some fashion from the average. There's something special about that person. But the reason it has value isn't so much based on what the person did, but the fact that the United States of America and the chain of command that that individual serves under is the source of that recognition.

You can have a justifiable sense of pride if you have a commendation ribbon or a Silver Star or a Bronze Star or a Distinguished Flying Cross or whatever meritorious service medal, whatever it may be. And the value of it is in the source. If I had one from the country of Uganda, I might have been heroic and swum creeks full of alligators and so forth and gotten the Ugandan Medal of Honor.

But that medal, that award, only has as much value as you attach to the source. You can struggle and spend years going to school and earning a degree and it's a great accomplishment and you hang that diploma, that piece of paper on the wall, but the diploma basically has the value that one associates with the granting institution. If you get it from a diploma mill through the mail, it doesn't have the same value as an accredited school that people know by reputation and know what it stands for.

So the point is the value of the award is primarily derived from its source. And when we earn a reward from God, when we earn an eternal blessing from God, the value of it is in its source. The justifiable pride, if you will, that a believer can take and reward from God is that it's from God.

It reflects God's standards of righteousness. It reflects God's approval and its association with God is what gives it value, not what we did to obtain it. And the great thing is that these rewards come to us through faith, which is a non-meritorious process.

All we do is take God at his word. If God makes a promise, if God states a principle, if God says this is the way to go and we say that's my reality, I'm going to set my priorities accordingly, we have placed ourselves in a position to be accredited with righteousness from God. And that in and of itself also puts us on the honor roll.

It puts us on the reward roll. And we can't boast. We can't say, well, look at the righteousness I generated.

Look at the ministry I engaged in. Look at the number of souls that I dragged kicking and screaming into the kingdom of God. Look at the efforts that I've expended.

Because the reward system from God is not based on works. It's based on faith. And it is the degree to which we believe God and take him at his word, know his word so that we can believe it, that these rewards come to us.

And they are a reflection of God's standards and God's character and God's grace. So if we are

of Christ, this is what Christ did. Christ didn't accept the reality that Satan put before him in the temptations.

He didn't accept the reality that was foisted on him by his culture and his time and his humanity. He was faithful and obedient to God in pursuing the goal of pleasing his father every single day of his earthly life. That was the example that he set as a human being.

And if we are of Christ, if we follow that example and pursue that goal ourselves, we are Abraham's seed. We are expressing the same kind of living faith that Abraham expressed. And we are heirs, like Abraham was, of great promises, promises of reward, promises of blessing.

And he goes on in Galatians 4 to talk about these things and talk about the contrast between the types of promises that came in the Old Testament and under the Old Covenant and the ones that come under the New. And he goes on into a discussion that we won't pursue. But turn over a few pages to Titus chapter 3 verse 7. We have the same author, Paul, writing to a young man that he trained as a pastor.

And in Titus, he's talking about this same principle up in chapter 3 verse 4. When the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. I wish I was eloquent enough to get across the force of this when you read it in Greek, because verse 5 is all set in the past. These are things that God has already done.

And then there is a transition starting in verse 7. This participle here, having been justified by his grace, sets the stage for something. And our salvation is talked about in verse 6. And then this justification, it means in verse 7, when we are justified by his grace. It's taken as a temporal participle, and it means that this is a condition for what follows.

And this justification by his grace qualifies us so that we might become, and this is a potential, all these other things are stated as facts in verse 6, which sets up the potential for what happens in verse 7, so that when we are justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. And this is a great translation in the New King James, some other English translations do it differently, but that is the Greek preposition kata in verse 7, and that's exactly what it means. Our heirship is according to the hope we have of eternal life.

We've done our study of eternal life, and we know that that is a term that Paul uses to comprehend everything in the eternal future. It's not just deliverance from the lake of fire. It's everything that God has in store for us in the millennial kingdom.

The opportunity to rule and reign with Christ, the opportunity to walk with him in white, to have the name that is known only to himself and to us, to partake of the hidden manna, the things that are

spoken of as great possibilities for us, that is eternal life. Those are the imperishables that Paul talked about earlier in Romans in chapter 2, when he said those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, the imperishables, God will grant eternal life. Well, we know that eternal life in the sense of deliverance from the lake of fire isn't something that comes because we are patient when we continue in well-doing.

This is a package for believers. Those believers who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, that's God's glory, honor, that's God's honor, the imperishable things which come from God, those are the rewards that we're talking about. And Romans chapter 2 and chapter 3 and chapter 4 are not addressing themselves to our point of salvation blessings and our point of salvation justification.

They're talking about the things that happen as we live our life as believers. And if we are patient in continuing to pursue those good things and we're seeking for glory and honor and immortality, that's the hope of eternal life, recognizing that the decisions we made today, you think about the things we all did today. We got up this morning, we had a set of things to accomplish, we had certain places to go, certain things to do.

We get to the end of the day, we look back and some of them got done and some of them didn't. If we stop and look at these things from an eternal perspective, it isn't so much what we got done today as what was in our mind when we set those goals, who were we trying to please as we accomplished those goals. It's necessary to live in the world and to do these mundane things like employment and keeping up a house and getting around and doing the things that we've set for ourselves.

But what Paul is trying to get his audience to do, which certainly applies to us, is to stop and think, what is the context of my life? Why have I set the priorities that I've set and the goals that I've set? Do I have the hope of eternal life? Am I thinking in terms of operating in faith so that God can declare me righteous, so that I am in a position to reflect His glory by receiving those rewards? And people will see that reward in the eternal future and say, look at the righteous standard of God. Here's this obscure person in complete anonymity, if you will. They're not on the radio, they haven't published a Christian book, they don't have an active ministry that's well known, they're not overseas, supported by several churches and so forth.

They're just an average person in an average neighborhood doing average things. But look how God marked them out and distinguished them because in the doing of these ordinary things, they're characterized by an extraordinary faith. They set their priorities because they wanted to please God.

They set their priorities because they wanted to lay up treasure in heaven and not on earth. They were concerned with God's honor and God's glory in these daily mundane things. And look how God picked them out and said, those things that you did in secret, I am going to reward openly

because it says something about God and what God values and what God cares about.

And that's a great challenge for us is to see the opportunity that we have. We don't have to be in quote, full-time Christian service. We don't have to be a pastor in a pulpit.

We don't have to be a missionary eating bugs in Botswana someplace. We don't have to be in some extraordinary activity. God can demonstrate His love.

God can impute His righteousness. God can reveal His glory in ordinary things, in ordinary decisions, in ordinary pursuits because we're characterized by faith. That's the great message of the book of Romans that Paul is illustrating in the life of Abraham.

He says, before Abraham climbed up the mountain with Isaac and raised the knife, before Abraham got circumcised and all of his household, God came down and said, Abraham, if you'll walk before me, I will make you a great nation. I will give you a son. And Abraham believed God.

All Abraham did was say, God has said it, it's so. And God declared him righteous and God's glory was revealed. And look at what God has been able to do because of Abraham's faith and the great example that he is throughout scripture.

That's what God wants to do in our life. And we keep thinking, well, if my circumstances were different, if I had different set of opportunities, if I were in a different position and had different resources, I could do some great things. I see some other people and I believe they're doing great things for God in that area.

And this is what the Jews wanted to preach. We're Jews and we have the opportunities. We've got the law and we've got Abraham as our father.

And you Greeks, you're second-class citizens. We're glad you came to Christ. We'll tolerate the fact that you're believers, but you're just not in the same league with us.

We've got the heritage. We've got the law and the promises and so forth. And we can put ourselves on either side of that equation as believers today.

We can say, well, I came from a Christian home and my great-great-grandfather was a preacher and my grandfather was a preacher and my father was a preacher and I'm a preacher. And we can be on the Jewish side of that equation. Or we can look and say, well, you know, I'm not out there on the cutting edge.

I didn't get to make the Russia trip and I didn't go to Africa village missions and I don't have the opportunity. I've got other obligations and I can't go down and work in this ministry or that opportunity. And we start judging things by the works that we associate with righteousness.

And the great thing about what Paul is teaching here is we have the opportunity in the very things

we're doing today, all of the things that we did today, all of the things that we'll do tomorrow, if we do them out of faith, because we're looking for patient continuance in that faith, we're seeking for glory and honor and immortality before God. And we want our priorities and our actions to reflect the fact that we believe what God says. We know that God will see in secret and will honor the fact that we trust him as we're performing our employment, as we're dealing with our relatives and doing the tasks.

When we do things that are supporting of our family, why do we do that? Is it because we don't want people to think that we're a bad provider or that we're a bad housekeeper or a bad employee or whatever? Well, I don't want to be ill thought of, so I'll do this. Or do we do it because we know that that's an opportunity God has placed before us? That the woman can be the glory of the man because she performs her duties as a wife and as a mother and as a support and as the thing that enables the man to do what he does. When we set that in our mind in the context of God's plan and the opportunity to reflect God's glory, the same mundane things that we did yesterday take on a whole new significance today because they're done in faith and God accounts them as righteousness.

God can account doing the dishes as righteousness or folding socks or making a trip to the grocery store or going in and performing whatever tasks we have in our employment or whatever the opportunities we have when we fellowship with other believers, fellowship with our family members and so forth. The thing that decides righteousness isn't the activity itself, it's the thoughts and intents of the heart. That's why the power of the Word of God is in its ability to critique and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

That's where the battle is won or lost. That's where righteousness is either manifested or where we fall short of the glory of God. It's in our soul on a daily basis.

And so that is going to be the basis of inheritance. And it is a not often emphasized truth about the Christian life that there is inequality in the eternal future, certainly in the millennial kingdom. And I prefer to just talk about the millennial kingdom because I can document that from Scripture.

I'm not sure about after the Gog and Magog rebellion, after the great white throne, the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem, there is no more night, no more sea. I can't see clearly enough from what Scripture says about any consequences of our earthly life after that point. But I can document and see time and again in Scripture where there is going to be a big difference in the resurrection, in the millennial kingdom.

When you read 2 Corinthians chapter 17 where Paul talks about the resurrection, he says a star differs from star in glory. That's how it's going to be in the resurrection. Some of us are going to be dim bulbs.

We're not going to reflect the glory of God the way that other believers are. And everyone is going to be shocked and surprised that well-known, published, widely notorious Christians are going to

have their ability to reflect the glory of God. And there's going to be totally obscure, unknown people that no one has ever heard of that are going to be shining like the sun in the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the Father.

And no one ever knew it because what they did was done in secret because it was the life of faith. So that's what Paul's encouragement is. And that's the hope of eternal life that Paul talks about so often.

It isn't just, well, I know I'm going to live forever so I'd better be good. The hope of eternal life that motivates the Christian life, and if you remember the triad of Christian virtues, faith, hope, and love, we've studied them many times and we know that faith is the means of living the Christian life, of walking the Christian walk, of having the worthy walk that's talked about in Colossians 1. Faith is the means. Hope is the motivation.

Why do we care about pleasing God in this life? Because we have an expectation. There's going to be a judgment seat of Christ. There's going to be an evaluation.

There will be reward and there will be discipline at the judgment seat of Christ. And that's a motivation. It's amazing the difference.

If you've ever taught children in a class of any kind, whether it's at church or in an academic setting, if kids know there's going to be a test at the end of the material, my how they pay attention, my how they take notes, my how they diligently hang on your every word. Is that going to be on the test? It's a motivation, knowing that that's something that's going to be evaluated. And when toward the end of school, you may remember just about this time of year when school is fixing the lead out and your teacher says, well, we're covering the last chapter in the biology book.

This isn't going to be testable. We've already had the final exam. People are looking out the window and nobody ever remembers the last chapter of the book.

It's not testable. It's not going to be held to account. The hope, the expectation we have at the return of Christ is the motivation for the Christian life.

Who cares if you please God or not if we're not held to account? So that's what Paul is talking about and that's going to be the basis of the inheritance. That's going to be the basis of the reward. You can see this in Acts chapter 20, verse 32, back in the early, early days of the church.

In Acts chapter 20, verse 32, this is the, you remember when Paul was getting ready to go to Rome and he swung through Ephesus and he called the Ephesian elders and he gave them a great charge. Here in Acts 20, it's one of the great passages to review for anyone who is in a position to teach the word of God or to follow his guidance there in Acts 20, 28. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to

shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

For I know this that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. This has happened today and we can always think of notorious examples of where somebody has been shepherding the flock and something bad happened. But think about the average today.

Think about the average church. What is the stress that's placed in the teaching and in the preaching and the guidance that we get in a lot of our Christianity today? It's on what we do. It's on how we appear.

Did you participate? Were you there? Did you give? Did you support? Did you go? Did you evangelize? Did you share the gospel? And we have a certain set of works that we associate righteousness with. And we lose sight of the principle that Paul is teaching here that don't get off in a system of works. You might as well be Jewish and go back under the law.

And these are some of the perverse things that are drawing away the disciples because if Satan and his side in this great conflict can get us oriented toward what we're doing, we're not going to be concentrating on faith and God's point will not be made before the angelic creation and before the human creation. And the great Bible that is being written in human history, our life isn't going to contribute to making God's point if we get distracted and fall into a system of works. Because works, as Paul has argued in Romans, the system of works just shows our sinfulness because none of us can be consistent.

None of us can be perfect in our works. And that makes the point that we're still sinful and that we still need God's grace. Well, that point's been made.

That was the other dispensation. And believers living under that dispensation were given a set of works. And here's the way that you can express your faith in God and your worship of God and your obedience to God.

Well, everybody fell short. And so now has been revealed righteousness apart from the works of the law. This is a daily righteousness, a living righteousness that's expressed through faith.

And it was attested by the law and the prophets, Paul told us earlier in this letter. Even in the Old Testament, God said, it's not your sacrifice. This is not the blood of goats and bulls.

What does God demand of you but to do justice, to love mercy and walk humbly with your God? God desires obedience more than sacrifice. That was taught even in the Old Testament. But the great illustration was given then.

But we have the opportunity to set all of that aside and let God demonstrate his righteousness through faith. So here in Acts, when we get down to the end of the chapter here, he says in verse

31, Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. What Paul is saying here is something that's near to his heart.

It's a central part of his ministry to believers. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. What is the word of God able to do? He tells us in verse 32, it is able to build you up, it is able to give you an inheritance.

This is not the work of Christ at the point of salvation that guarantees inheritance. This is what the word of God can do in the life of a believer. The word of his grace is able to build you up.

It's able to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. We've talked about living the life of faith. Paul is making the point that we should live by faith, that that's the basis of receiving the declaration of God's righteousness, the accounting of God's righteousness.

What is faith? Faith is looking at something that God has said and believing it to be so, isn't it? Well, it's impossible to have faith if we don't have something to have faith in. Faith must have an object. The object of faith is the word of God.

The great opportunity we have and that we take advantage of is to study the word of God, to learn it so that we have propositional truths, statements of God, statements about God that we can decide are true and decide are real and make it the object of our faith. We are studying something tonight that makes a difference in the way we live. We can decide tomorrow to try to stop ourselves midstream and say, why am I doing what I'm doing? What is the context in which my life fits? Am I just a cog in a great machine that's accomplishing earthly goals or am I a cog in a greater machine that is accomplishing heavenly goals? Am I in fact a place where God's glory is being reflected? Am I doing what I'm doing because I've got a set of spiritual understandings, a set of spiritual priorities? That's living the life of faith.

That comes from God's word. The ability to have a different reality in our soul comes directly out of God's word. God's word is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

That word of grace is able to build us up. It's able to give us an inheritance. Without the word of God, we can't have faith.

Without faith, we're not going to have an inheritance. We are going to have the basic...it's kind of like the cars. You know how they come out the cars and they say, well, the basic car comes with a seat, a steering wheel, an engine, four tires, and a hood, and all of the other things are amenities.

They start adding to the sticker price. If you want a radio, that's extra. If you want bucket seats, that's extra.

If you want an air conditioner, that's extra. All of us are going to have a basic package with which

we will be blissfully content in the eternal future. We're all in Christ, and no one is going to say, well, I don't know why I even bothered to believe in Christ.

This eternal life stuff is just for the birds. I might as well have just dived into the lake of fire at the Great White Throne. No one is going to say that, but wouldn't it be great if we could be a brighter reflector of God's glory, if we could be participating to a greater extent in the Millennial Kingdom and in the things that Christ is going to do during that thousand years that are going to manifest and declare the greatness of God's character and grace.

Wouldn't it be great to be in the thick of it and be there with Christ and be qualified because we learned in this life how to understand God's Word and God's plan and God's character, and we were built up into something here that qualifies us to do that in the next. If we keep that in our mind, that's the hope of eternal life. There are great things that we can be a part of in the Millennial Kingdom and beyond, and if we get that in our mind now, that is going to motivate us, and we will see our life in a different light, and it isn't just that I'm accomplishing tasks for my employer or I'm doing the same things that I've done day after day, week after week for years.

These things make a difference because I'm viewing them in an eternal perspective. The Word of His grace is able to build us up, and I will confess that I think that this is a biblical principle. It has been taught in the past by many teachers that there is something that is constructed in our soul by the Word of God.

It's absolutely true. The Word of God is able to build us up. It grows us.

It turns us into something we were not. We are renewed by the transforming of our minds. Paul is going to tell us a little bit later in this book.

So that's the challenge. That's why it's so productive to spend time in the Word of God, because that gives us an opportunity for faith, and expressing faith is the ballgame. That's the objective.

That's where God's righteousness is revealed. So what a great thing it is to see this in the Book of Romans, and not be constantly taking these passages and relating them back to the point of salvation, but to recognize that Paul is arguing in the strongest possible terms. He says, look at Abraham.

Abraham was a believer. Why did he receive the promise? Look back at chapter 4 of Romans now, because I think with this background we're going to be able to appreciate what he argues here, starting in verse 13 of Romans 4. We'll just read this and let Paul's argument speak for itself. It's very eloquent.

It doesn't need a lot of expansion. The promise that he would be the heir of the world, this is a reward for a believer. The promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of no effect. Paul's argument here is, look, if reward from God is based on perfect obedience, if it's based on just following a set of rules and hitting a set of marks action-wise, then the promise is null and void, because we're never going to be able to do that. We are still in sin.

We sin and fall short of the glory of God, he argued in chapter 3. So nobody is going to get the promise. Look at Abraham. Abraham did the Hagar thing.

Abraham did the Egypt thing. Abraham made lots of mistakes, and if the promise for him is based on what he did, he disqualified himself. But thanks be to God, the promise to Abraham is just based on the fact that he believed God, and that's what he's going to go on to say.

He says, if it's based on works, the faith is void, the promise is of no effect. Why? Because the law, the system of works, brings wrath. The whole purpose of the law was to demonstrate the fact that we don't have the ability to please God in our own efforts as believers.

We can't, just by virtue of having expressed faith in God, generate righteousness, even after salvation, even as the people of God, even as believers in Christ, the body of Christ, we can't generate righteousness. Our righteousness comes the same way our salvation came. And the law just shows us what the penalty is for failing, and that is death.

The law brings wrath. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. This word transgression is interesting in verse 15, because this is the Greek word parabasis, parabasis, P-A-R-A-B-A-S-I-S.

And it's just what you would expect when you think of it in English terms. Basis means you've got a foundation for something. Para means alongside, so this is off the foundation, off the basis.

And to transgress is what this word means, to be off the basis. If you don't have a boundary, you can't cross a boundary. And this isn't saying that where there's no law, there's no sin.

But it's saying if you don't paint a boundary line, then there's no crossing the line. There has to be a line before you can cross it. And so the law, God set these boundary lines.

He said, here's the perfect boundary line of righteousness. Well, everybody did the parabasis. Everybody crossed the line.

And it demonstrated that we can't generate righteousness. We have to operate in faith and let God's righteousness come into our life. So that's the point he makes there.

But here's where he gets into the meat of it here in verse 16. Therefore it, the promise that came to Abraham, is of faith, so that it might be according to grace. Now here's the wonderful potential.

By faith, God's righteousness and God's character are revealed and reflected. And that's the point of history. That's the point of our existence.

So now we're back on the mark of God's plan. God isn't interested in us trying to generate righteousness in the filthy rag mode that we're capable of. By faith, it's according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed.

And it's sure because it depends on God's character and God's grace and not on our works. Not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. And this is a little aside to the Jewish believers in the congregation.

He says, look, this is why the Gentiles have just as great an opportunity as you do. It's wonderful that you worship God through keeping the feasts and that you, if you're doing it for the right reasons, observing the things in the law for a Jewish believer in the Old Testament days was a wonderful thing. But only if it sprang from faith.

And he's saying, look, don't get the idea that the law is the only place where righteousness can come or that righteousness comes from it at all. It comes from faith. And this is why the Gentiles, who follow Abraham's pattern, can also have righteousness declared to them.

As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations. In the presence of him whom he believed, God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did. And this is a great rule of thumb.

When we look around us in the Christian world, who is at the forefront? Who is getting the attention? Who is getting the glory? If you look at a program, is it the originator of the program that is getting the glory? People saying, oh, so-and-so is such a wonderful, this is such a wonderful program that he's developed. And he's coming to speak and I'm going to go hear him. He's the greatest teacher.

And we can even take people who are trying to communicate the word of God and put them on a pedestal and make them the object of glory and make them, this is what the Corinthians did, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos. Well, Paul and Apollos were doing wonderful things, but if you start ascribing the glory and the notoriety and start associating the truth of God with a person instead of with God, we've done the very thing Paul is arguing against. Paul is saying, and you can see it here, he's saying that God, who gives life to the dead, God, who calls those things into existence who are not, the righteousness that comes from faith puts the spotlight on God, on his grace, on his character, on what he does, not on what we do.

And it's amazing how we can name drop or we can deed drop. And well, when I was in Russia last month or last year, or well, when I was down at the, I just happened to be down at the homeless shelter last week, and as I was giving the gospel to these five people and so forth, we do this because we associate righteousness with that in our own mind and it comes out in our conversation with others. And it's, it's a, it's a reflection.

It's a red flag waving in our mind. Why do we think that that deed is where the righteousness is? If

we're trusting God and God's promises, God will be at the center. And so this is why in verse 18, he says, look, Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope, believed.

Contrary to human expectation, believed in the expectation that God put before him. And he believed so that he became the father of many nations. According to what was spoken, so shall your descendants be.

He was not weak in faith. He did not consider his own body already dead. Now this is where it gets right down to brass tacks, isn't it? Abraham had to make a choice.

God came down and said, look, you a hundred year old man, you're going to have a baby. You and your wife, you're a 90 something year old wife. You all are going to have a child.

So Abraham had to make a choice. He looked at his body, he looked at his wife. And even in those days when you started pushing a hundred, you started shriveling up and people didn't have children and he did not consider his own body already dead.

He didn't consider the deadness of Sarah's womb. And this is the issue that faces us every single day. A job opportunity dries up.

The source of provision looks like it isn't going to be there. The relationship that we thought we had with somebody isn't there. The things that we took for granted suddenly aren't there in the human realm.

And we have to make a choice between what God says, take no thought, my God shall supply all your needs, look at the flowers, at their clothing glory, what will God do for you, cast your cares upon him, the promises, the principles, the identity that we have in Christ, the opportunity that we have through faith, what God wants to accomplish in our life. We set that in opposition to human circumstances and we have to make a choice. Abraham looked at those things and he had some huge things to ignore.

To ignore being 100, to ignore his wife being in her 90s and to believe that they were going to have a child. That's what we are called to. We are called to the faith of Abraham as believers.

And that's why it talks about the tenacity of Abraham's faith. If this were talking about salvation, our salvation doesn't depend on how much we believe or how long we believe or what odds we overcome in order to believe in Christ, does it? That's not a part of our salvation. And this is not talking about salvation.

It's talking about our daily life. We are called to the faith that Abraham was called to and that Abraham expressed. He didn't consider his body, he didn't consider his wife, he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief but was strengthened in faith giving glory to God.

The fact that he believed God, what a glorious testimony and what a great thing God was able to

do because God did give him a son and it was a work of God and the righteousness that was expressed and everything that was a part of that makes us think of God and what God is able to do. It doesn't make us think of, my, what an athlete Abraham must have been and what a woman Sarah was that they were able to have a child at the age of 100. It's clearly an act of God.

Abraham in verse 21 was fully convinced that what God had promised he was also able to perform. That's the issue for us every single day. Whatever it is that we're doing, however mundane the decision or the task or the circumstance that we face, do we believe that what God has promised he is able to perform? If we do and if we act accordingly all of these things become ours and we will be a bright star and we will have that hope of glory and honor and imperishable things in the eternal future.

And in verse 22 Paul sums up that argument, because he did not waver, because he was fully convinced, because he operated on that basis, it was accounted to him for righteousness. And this wasn't Abraham's salvation righteousness. This was Abraham's righteousness as a believer.

And that's why Abraham is going to be one of the greatest in the kingdom. That's why David is going to be one of the greatest in the kingdom and Moses and Caleb and Joshua. And those people who in spite of their failures and in spite of their sin and in spite of the dismal works record that many of us have, it's not the works that are going to be determinative.

It's faith. And this is why Paul mentioned earlier in chapter 2 that if we fail in this regard, if we overlook this opportunity and this calling, we are storing up for ourselves discipline on the day of judgment. It's an accumulative thing.

It accumulates. The wrath accumulates. The reward accumulates.

The wood, hay, and stubble pile accumulates. The gold, silver, and precious stones pile accumulates. And the wonderful thing is that no matter what our circumstances or our earthly opportunities are, every single day we have a brand new chance to work on the gold, silver, and precious stones pile.

And it doesn't matter what the task is. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are. All of us have the ability to believe God.

All it takes is knowing the Word of God, accepting His reality, and acting accordingly regardless of how circumstances look, believing that the Word of God is more real than anything else in life. And it reminds us of the importance of knowing the Word of God and meditating on the Word of God. It's amazing.

You know, we can study for years and fill notebooks, but sometimes it's almost as though, well, it isn't going to last in my soul. I've got to get it down on paper. Shouldn't we, after dozens and hundreds and thousands of hours of study, shouldn't we be able to sit with no paper and no Bible

and no aids and dredge something up from all that study? Because that's the only thing that counts.

That faith doesn't take place in our notebook or in our Bible. It takes place in our soul. And after all of the study that we've done, Psalm 1 says, the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, who meditates in it day and night, he's the one that's blessed.

He's the one that has that opportunity for God to account righteousness. We have that opportunity. All of us in this room and most of the folks who will be listening to this on tape have had lots of opportunities to hear the Word of God.

And it's what we do with it that makes a difference. That's going to be the standard of accounting at the judgment seat of Christ. That's the standard of accounting today and tomorrow and the next day.

What a great opportunity it is because we don't need any special equipment. We don't need pads. We don't need helmets.

We don't need swords and shields. All we need is the breath of life in our bodies and the Word of God in our soul, and God can account just as great a righteousness to us as he did to Abraham. That's the message that Paul is anxious to communicate to us in Romans.

And it's the one that the Holy Spirit will bring to our minds in the hours and days to come. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your Word.

We thank you for the opportunity it gives us to express faith, to not waver, but to be fully convinced in our minds that what you have promised you will perform. We thank you that you have given us the privilege and the opportunity of being a place where your glory can be revealed and reflected both now and in the eternal future. And we pray that as a result of studying these things, God the Holy Spirit will make them real to us, will prod our conscience, and will bring us to wakefulness and to mindfulness during the hours and the days to come so that we can take advantage of this tremendous opportunity that you have given us in your grace.

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for his sake. Amen.