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Okay, as we prepare to study the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment to review the status of things in our souls and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit so that the Word of God will do its work in us and through us, shall we pray? Father, we thank you for bringing us through another week. We thank you for the many ways that you have expressed your grace and your love for us, the things that we can see and probably many things that we cannot see that have sustained us and protected us, preserved us and blessed us in so many ways. We thank you for the opportunity we have to worship and fellowship together in your Word.

We pray that as we look at these subjects this evening that are a challenge to understand that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us, give us wisdom and discernment so that we will come to a right understanding, that we will rightly divide the Word of Truth and as a result, we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work and we'll live a life that pleases you. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. We have been studying the book of Romans and we've come to chapter 9 and on Sundays we've been studying 2 Samuel which we have completed and we've completed the study of David that that entailed and we're at a transition point.

We're going to be beginning a series of topical studies and it is at this happy junction in time and our Old Testament and New Testament studies that we find Romans 9 bringing up a pair of subjects which are critically important for us to understand. Normally in beginning our essential truths series we would start with some very fundamental and foundational things, however, because of where we are in Romans and the need to address these subjects, we're going to start with hard things and we're going to start with advanced things and it's just since we do everything else in an unorthodox manner, we might as well start out this series in the same way. So I'm going to give just the briefest of introductions here because we have spent enough time in Romans 9 to know where we are and what the issues are that are presented there.

The thrust of this book is directed toward righteousness by works and people who want to prove to themselves or prove to others or prove to God even that they are righteous, that they're diligent workers and so forth. We know that that is not the biblical approach to our lives. We're not judged according to what we do.

We're judged according to what we think. It is the thoughts and intents of the heart that are evaluated. And in presenting this subject to the Romans, Paul has come to Romans 9 and he's talking about Israel who has followed the other path.

They are believers and they have been trying to achieve righteousness by works and in doing this, they have missed the boat. And Paul says in Romans 9, this is really a shame. Look at the eight things that they have that from God, they have eight things that they have to do.

One of the things that they have to do historically, the adoption and the glory and the covenants

and so forth, if anyone ought to understand this, it is Israel. And yet, believing Israelites have missed the boat. Now, anticipating somewhat where we're going, you are probably familiar with the passage that we will soon encounter in Romans 11 where Paul talks about the tree and the branches.

And he says that the rejection, the lack of understanding of Israel, their hardness of hearts in understanding this righteousness by faith has created an opportunity for God to bless the Gentiles. And that they, like a branch, have been broken off out of the tree and the Gentiles have been grafted in. Well, just by way of preview of where we're going, we're going to see that just like everything else that we've encountered in Romans, this is not salvation and lack thereof.

God does not take Israel and break them out of the salvation tree. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, and one of his gifts is, of course, salvation. So once you're saved, you can't be broken out of the tree and you're no longer saved.

So whatever the tree is, it's not salvation. It is the same issue that we've been talking about, and it's the issue of inheritance. It's the issue of reward.

It's the issue of production and function in God's plan. We have compressed the spectrum of where a believer can end up in God's plan to a very narrow range, to where if you're the worst, most unfaithful believer there is, you're pretty close to being as well off as the greatest, most faithful believer that ever walked. And that in the eternal future, there's just not a whole lot of difference.

Maybe a little bit. You might have an extra ribbon on your tunic, or you might have an extra room in your mansion if you were the Apostle Paul, but if you're a terrible reprobate and live a complete life of indifference to God and his plan as a believer, you're pretty much going to get the same basic package of blessing and walk with Christ and do all of these things. That's just not the biblical message.

The two topics that we're going to address tonight that spring out of Romans chapter 9 are going to make that clear, and we're not going to fabricate a lot of logical arguments. We're not going to try to construct a castle in the air or in the sand or anything else. What we're going to do is take a look at the passages in the New Testament that address these two subjects.

In Romans 9, the introduction to this section of the letter is in verses 6 and 7. It is not, what's the matter with Israel? Why is it that Israel, if they're the people of God and have the scriptures and have been around for a couple of thousand years, why aren't they latching onto and promoting the message that Paul is giving here of righteousness by faith? Why haven't they seen the change in dispensation and not only accepted Christ as their Savior, but embraced and enthusiastically responded to the new call that's a part of this age? They just haven't done it. And Paul says, it's not that the word of God has taken no effect. They are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham.

Birth into the family of Abraham alone did not qualify you for the covenant blessings. It wasn't enough to be born as a child of Abraham. The analogy here is it's not enough to simply be born into the family of God if you're looking at the covenanted blessings, if you're looking at the rewards and the full-blown eternal life package.

Now, someone will hear this and immediately say, well, you're saying it's not enough to be saved. You know, the blood of Jesus Christ is not sufficient. What are you saying? We're not talking about salvation and we're not talking about the sufficiency of the work of Christ.

We're talking about the potential that God has laid before us. Ishmael lived a wonderful life. God blessed him and God was with him, but he did not maximize his opportunities.

Esau was a wealthy man. Esau became the father of many tribes and clans and inherited a region in the Middle East. But he didn't get what Jacob got.

Ishmael didn't get what Isaac got. And the Gentile nations in the Old Testament days did not have the privileges. They didn't have the eight things that belonged to Israel here in chapter nine.

Now, we're not talking about salvation. We're talking about do you care enough about God and his plan to push toward the mark of the high calling, not just the minimum clearing the bar to escape the lake of fire? Do you really want to live to please God? Does it impress us enough that Jesus Christ came and died for us not only to deliver us eternally, but also to deliver us out of this present evil age, to transform our lives and transform our thinking and make us co-heirs with him and co-rulers with him in the millennial kingdom and beyond? There's a lot more going on than just getting signed up into the Marine Corps. It's not a matter of just getting recruited, signing on the line and getting issued a couple of sets of camouflage utilities.

There's a lot of potential once you join that crew. There's a lot of things that can be done. And you're signed up so that you can accomplish a mission.

The mission of the Marine Corps is not to gain as many recruits as possible. But you would think in Christianity that that's our goal. We're just all recruiters.

We want to recruit everybody that signs on the dotted line. We've got another recruit and God is pleased and the mission is accomplished. You don't recruit people just to get them to wear the uniform and go around and recruit other people unless you're maybe in a pyramid soap selling organization.

Normally, your organization has a mission. It has a purpose for being. And sure, recruiting and bringing new people in is important, but they are there to accomplish a goal.

This is the goal, going beyond the minimum, responding to the call of God. We've seen in our Roman study that the promise to Abraham that Paul discusses in chapter nine here has nothing

to do with salvation. Abraham's been saved for decades.

He has responded to the calling of God. He's built altars. He sacrificed.

God has spoken with him for years and years and years. But God comes to him and makes a promise to him that is at the pinnacle of Old Testament opportunity. And that is to be the father of a great nation, for his descendants to be marked out and separate and called the people of God, to be the custodians of the word of God, to symbolically worship God.

And when I say symbolically, worship God in a symbolic fashion that will communicate God not only to their nation, but to the surrounding nations, to give them a special privilege, a special mission and a special opportunity as believers. And they have a choice as to whether or not they're going to fulfill that. Some of them do.

They are the true Israel. They're the Israel of God. Others who have the opportunity, they've signed on the line.

They got their basic issue. They never go any further. They're privates for the whole rest of their career.

They never even get that first stripe because they just don't care. They're satisfied to have just joined the group. That's what he's talking about here.

And so in verse eight of chapter nine of Romans, he says, that is those who are the children of the flesh. These are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. Now, we have a little trouble there.

Are we saying you mean you can be a believer and not be a child of God? I thought those were synonyms. We're going to see some scripture tonight that will help us clarify that. But the analogy here is that just being a child of Abraham, that gives you the opportunity.

But you've got to make a decision about the covenant. Are you going to be circumcised? Are you going to pursue the inheritance? And God made this point by the elder serving the younger. Because Esau, by birthright, had that coming to him.

But because of his decisions, he lost it. Ishmael, by birthright, had that coming to him. But because of his priorities, he lost it.

And God demonstrated that it's not enough to just be born as a son of Abraham or a descendant of Abraham. You've got to want it. You've got to pursue it by faith.

And even if you're not the first guy in line, if you want it, you're going to get it. That's the big picture between Israel and the Gentiles. Israel was the firstborn son, as it were.

Israel, as believers and as the people of God, when Christ came, and a lot of them were the first couple of generations in the church, they didn't ever get righteousness by faith. It just didn't make sense to them. And so the younger son, the Gentiles, benefit from this just the way that Jacob did, just the way that Isaac did.

It is an opportunity created by the rejection of the elder son that makes Isaac's inheritance possible and makes Jacob's inheritance possible and, ironically, makes our inheritance possible. Because of the apathy in the first few generations of Jewish Christians toward this subject that Paul is addressing in Romans, that's why his ministry to the Gentiles blossomed. You've got 11 other apostles going to the Jews.

And what happened to them? After the first couple of generations, you don't hear any more about the church in Israel. It's all the Gentiles. It's the ones in Asia Minor and Ephesus and all of the in Rome and so forth that are all outside the nation of Israel.

How come Jerusalem and Israel and Antioch and not Antioch, but Nazareth and other towns right there in Israel, how come they're not the great centers of early Christianity? It's all outside because the elder brother spurned his inheritance. He didn't care about it and sold it for a mess of pottage for the gratification of being seen by men, just like the Pharisees did. So that's the pattern here.

So what we're focusing on tonight is this concept here. They are not all children just because they are the seed of Abraham, but in Isaac your seed shall be called. There's something special about Isaac.

So what does it mean to be the seed of Abraham? What does it mean to be the seed of Abraham? Traditionally, and I don't mean to argue directly with the great mainstream of thought and interpretation on this, and I will tell you that the normal understanding of this is that being the seed of Abraham means to have expressed saving faith in Jesus Christ, our initial point of salvation. That's the traditional, the routine, the usual. You talk to anybody of any note or that has published anything, and that's probably what you're going to see.

Not exclusively, but in the main, seed of Abraham is thought to be a synonym for salvation from the lake of fire. What we want to do tonight is look at what scripture has to say about this and see if that can possibly hold up or if, in fact, the understanding we've come to in Romans is accurate, that being the seed of Abraham is a believer who is responding to the call, taking advantage of the opportunity. So let's begin.

We're going to look at scripture, obviously, as our primary authority, and I'm going to present the proposition. This is sort of like when you watch these debates on public television or whatever, they put forth a proposition and one side defends it and the other side attacks it. Well, our proposition tonight is going to be that seed of Abraham is a synonym not for the saved, quote

unquote, but for those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises.

Seed of Abraham equals those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises. And that is probably familiar to you as a quote from Hebrews 6.12. Those who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises. And we might as well start there in Hebrews chapter six.

So if you'll turn with me to that chapter, he has talked about those who have been enlightened and fall away and that it's impossible to renew them to a change of mind. That word repentance means to change one's mind. You cannot, we cannot, none of us can make someone else change their mind.

It doesn't say they cannot repent, does it? In verse six of chapter six of Hebrews, it says, these people who have been enlightened, they've tasted the heavenly gift in verse four, they've become partakers of the Holy Spirit, they've tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. Now, people have tried to say that this is someone that has just been given the gospel, but has not, they've just tasted it and they haven't really accepted it. And as I've pointed out in the past, this word for tasted is the same word that is used of Jesus Christ, tasting death for all men.

And he didn't just approach it and walk away. He fully experienced it. And if you go through this list, this can only be believers.

If you have been enlightened, if you have partaken of the heavenly gift, if you have become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and if you have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, you're a believer. There's no getting around it. That is the description of a believer, not only a believer, but a believer that has experienced some growth and has come to some understanding of the word of God.

Now, if someone in that category falls away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. It doesn't say they cannot repent, does it? It doesn't say it is impossible for them to repent. It says it is impossible to renew them to repentance, for an outside agent to come in and change their mind.

And this is the mistake that a lot of us make when we run across believers who have maybe begun well and then fallen for some weird diversion away from the faith, who have fallen into a theological strand that is off the main track, who have gotten into an experiential type of thing or into the charismatic gift area or into the evangelize the world in the next couple of years crowd or whatever, who has developed some sort of enthusiasm for something that's not the thrust of the word of God, which is righteousness by faith. And in doing many of these things, they will make that the priority, make that the goal. And it winds up being a righteousness by works sort of a thing to impress others or to impress themselves, to overcome guilt, to accomplish some other purpose.

If someone gets into that category, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. None of us can

go take them and get them back at the initial point where they changed their mind and began this list of basic things up in verses one and two. No, you can't argue them into it.

And many of us have tried. We find someone and we say, you know, if they just if I could just explain it the way I understand it, they would see the light and say, you know, this really is a waste of time. I'm going to get back to the true path here.

And we waste our breath and we waste our time. If someone has already begun to make progress in the plan of God and then they regress and go into some weird thing, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. It's impossible to renew them to a change of mind.

Under a certain condition that's given in this verse, we can't argue them into it. We can't plead with them. We can't persuade them.

We can't cry on their shoulder. So long as a lot of your versions may say since, but an equally good translation and one that I think makes better sense here is so long as or while this has the idea that this second condition is going on. And as long as this second condition is going on, they can't be renewed to repentance.

So long as they crucify again for themselves the son of God and put him to an open shame. The specific reference that the author of Hebrews is making here is that Jewish Christians who accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ and began to learn about righteousness by faith reached a certain point and fell away. And the pressure of their peers, the pressure of their upbringing, the cares of this world, go back and read the parable of the soils, all the things that can keep one from growing, got to them.

And they said, it's just more comfortable. I don't have these rifts with my family. I'm not browbeaten by my friends.

I don't have to disregard my heritage and my upbringing. I'm just going to go back to the sacrificial system. It's just easier.

I'm just going to go back and worship at the temple and I'm just going to do what I've always done. I kind of went wild with this Christianity thing and I've just got to fall back into the established normal things because I'm just getting flack from every side. What happens when you do that? The whole shadow system of the law portrays the coming of Christ and the crucifixion of Christ.

It foreshadows it. It says this is what's going to come and solve our problems. If you accept Christ, Christ is the end of the law for all who believe.

Christ did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He's fulfilled the law. If you as a Christian go back to the shadow system, you imply that Christ's work isn't done, that he still needs to come, that he's got to come and die all over again.

You crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame. How does it put him to an open shame? It says his work's not sufficient. I still need the blood of goats and bulls.

I still need to keep the feasts. I still need to keep the law. I still need to live in the earlier age and follow the earlier calling, the calling of Christ and the new life.

The death he died, he died to sin. The life he lives, he lives to God. All of those things just aren't meaningful enough.

I need to go back to the old way. And it crucifies Christ afresh. It puts him to an open shame, falling back into the ritual system.

That's the specific way that these believers were falling away. And he goes on in verse 7, he says, look, the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, throughout the word of God, water is used as a picture of truth. The tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in its season in the Old Testament and so forth.

The washing of water and renewing of the Holy Spirit that's spoken of in the New Testament. We know that water is a very common way of referring to the word of God. The earth drinks in the rain that often comes upon it and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God.

Notice this is an issue of blessing, not an issue of salvation. It doesn't say the earth which receives the gospel and responds is saved. This says if you receive the water and produce fruit, you're blessed.

This is the issue for believers, isn't it? Are you going to be fruitful? Are you going to be a branch that abides in the vine and bears much fruit? This is the will of my father, that you bear much fruit, the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5.22 and so forth. If you're being watered and cultivated, this is a cultivated field.

It's just like the parable of the soils. It ought to bring forth fruit. If it's cultivated and watered and it doesn't bring forth fruit, it bears thorns and briars.

In verse 8, it is rejected and near to being cursed. You're getting down to the bottom rung of the saved here. You still have your eternal life and you're not going to the lake of fire, but you're as close to the lake of fire as a believer can get.

You're near to being cursed and that the fruit of your life is nothing but thorns and thistles and the produce of your life is going to be burned. Notice the field is not burned. The field is not scooped up and hauled away in a truck.

The produce of the field is what is burned. It goes along with the wood, hay and stubble being

burned and the man being saved yet so as by fire and so forth. Does this make sense here in Hebrews chapter 6? We're talking about a believer.

We're talking about someone who has tasted the good word of God and so forth, has been enlightened and drinks in the rain and is cultivated and produces only thorns and thistles. It's possible there's such a thing as a reprobate and this is the fate. The fruit of your life goes up in smoke.

And he says, Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you. Yes, things that accompany soterios, the noun that we translate salvation. It equally is well translated as deliverance.

We saw in our other studies that not only did Christ die to deliver us from the lake of fire, but from this present evil age, when we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, it's deliverance. It's salvation in time. This word comprehends not only eternal deliverance, but also temporal deliverance.

The things that accompany deliverance. That's what the author is convinced of, even though we speak in this manner. And he says, God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love.

Now, are we saved by work? Are we saved by labor of love? We're not. But those are signs of growth. Those are signs of production, of the bearing of fruit.

And he says, I am convinced that you're not this reprobate believer whose life, life's work and life's produce is fit only for burning. God is not unjust to forget. You, you're not this kind of believer.

You've got work and labor of love that you've shown toward his name. You've ministered to the saints and continue to minister. This is, if this was a salvation issue, he would be talking about Christ and sin, righteousness and judgment, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation.

But this is lifestyle. This is obedience. This is pursuit of the goal.

That's the context. You might be able to make this work if you tear it out of its context. But if you read chapter five, where he says, by this time you ought to be teachers, but you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.

You need milk and not solid food. And he's talking about growth in the Christian life. This is in the middle.

And now he's talking about growth and ministry in the Christian life. Again, everything in chapter six is addressed to believers. And that's important because what we're looking at here is, look down at verse 13 of Hebrews six.

This is where we're going, getting back to the seed of Abraham. Now, we have to understand that we're talking about believers when we get to Hebrews 6, 13, for when God made a promise to Abraham. Because he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, saying, surely, blessing, I will bless you and multiplying, I will multiply you.

He didn't say, I am saving you, I'm paying for your sins and rescuing you from damnation in the lake of fire. This is the promise to Abraham. I will multiply you.

I will bless you. This is God talking to a believer. Same context all the way through.

And so, in verse 15, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. See what great sense this makes. People who take this as talking about salvation, when they get to verse 15, wind up with the P in TULIP, which is the five points of Calvinism, Reformed theology, perseverance of the saints.

If you're truly saved, you have to endure. You've got to persevere. But it's not talking about salvation.

If you want to inherit, if you want to receive reward, if you want to maximize your potential in the plan of God, you've got to patiently endure. Remember Romans chapter 2, those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality, God will grant eternal life. Very same thing.

We did an exhaustive study in Romans chapter 2 and demonstrated beyond all doubt that that is talking about the judgment of believers. So what's the key here? If you want to be something beyond a plebe, if you want to be something beyond an apartment dweller, if you will, in the eternal future, if you want to inherit, by way of analogy, land, what's the difference in a renter and an owner? If you're an owner, you own something. You have a piece of land and it's yours from the surface all the way down to the center of the earth, all the mineral rights, all the oil that's underneath it.

Any water and springs that are underneath it. When you take out a title deed and you pay for that land and pay off your loan and so forth, it's yours from the surface all the way to the core of the earth. And unless you sell it or give it away or die and leave it behind, it's yours.

It's your possession. You may rent it out to someone, but it still belongs to you. Possession of the land is a reward to faithful Old Testament believers.

There will be Old Testament saints in the millennial kingdom who will be landowners. We'll see the passages as we go forward. Other Old Testament saints will mill about in the land, but they'll be renters.

They'll be there and they'll be milling about, but it's not the same as owning a piece of the rock, if

you will. And yet there's going to be still others that won't even be allowed access to the historical land of Palestine. They'll be alive.

They have eternal life, but they'll be elsewhere on the planet. That's why God leaves all the continents in place and why there are kingdoms and kings who send tribute and send emissaries to Israel and to Jerusalem, because it's occupied by people. And in the millennium, you start out with all believers.

So who are they? They're people who didn't qualify to live in the land, who don't have an inheritance. They're off in Tibet somewhere. Okay.

And this promise to Abraham is not a salvation promise. We don't even have the record of Abraham's salvation. This is his dealings with God as a believer.

And it goes on in Hebrews to talk about the swearing of the oath and so forth. But this is based on patient endurance. Isaac patiently endured.

Not only was he circumcised at birth, but when he grew up, he heeded the things of God. He worshipped God. He built altars.

He sought God's will when he got a wife and his wife came from the people of God. Ishmael was circumcised at birth. Ishmael was a physical descendant of Abraham, analogous to birth into the family of God.

But he didn't care about those things. He got his wife from Egypt. He went off and lived elsewhere.

And that's the contrast. Notice in verse 16 of Hebrews 6, men indeed swear by the greater and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, but by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie.

We might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. That is promise language. That's inheritance language that speaks of the category of believer that forgets those things which are behind and presses toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

It's not everyone that gets that strong consolation. There are believers in this life who have their eternal salvation as securely as anyone and are miserable. They don't get strong consolation.

And why is that? They don't flee for refuge to God. They don't lay hold of the hope that is set before us. They don't run with patience the race that is set before us.

All of the language that Paul uses in the New Testament. If we as believers don't see that and

don't latch onto it and pursue it, we don't get these things. We don't have strong consolation.

We're not going to have an inheritance in the eternal future. And that inheritance is a separate and distinct blessing and reward from the basic salvation package that we think of through faith in Christ. And let me say again, I do not want to diminish the greatness of our salvation and the fact that we are saved.

That's a wonderful thing. But it's not the only thing. And it's not the end of the challenge and it's not the end of the call.

It's just the beginning. And to have seized on the beginning and be waving our recruiting paper around and never see the opportunities and never move forward is a tragedy because it denies and ignores the great call of God in Christ Jesus. Notice he goes on here, this hope in verse 19, we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which enters the presence behind the veil where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus having become high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

And he goes on to talk about that. And Hebrews is a terrific book. Many of us have been through it in various studies.

And when you get to chapter 10 and he talks about coming with boldness before the throne and having our hearts sprinkled and so on, these are all, this is the beginning of that discussion here. God has made a promise and he's confirmed it by two immutable things, himself and his oath, his character and his word, that there is an inheritance. There is a great promise for people who are willing to pursue it, for believers who are willing to pursue it.

So that's the concept that we're going to look at here. We see it in Hebrews chapter 6. Turn back with me now to John chapter 8. We're still focusing on this idea. What does it mean to be the seed of Abraham? We've seen in Hebrews 6 that it means to put faith in God.

To put faith in the promise, not a salvation promise, but a reward promise, a blessing promise. We go back to John chapter 8, and Jesus is talking to some of those who by birth should have been heirs of this promise. And in John 8, 34, Jesus, I'll start up in the low 30s here, verse 31, Jesus said to the Jews who believed him, notice, these are Jews and they believe him.

They're positive toward his message. If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. This is instruction for believers now, right? Abiding in the word, you are my disciples.

You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. One of the most abused quotes of the whole New Testament. They answered him, notice they, who are the they? The Jews who believed in him, the Jews that he's telling how to live the life of a believer.

We are Abraham's descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say you will be made free? Jesus answered them, most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin

is a slave of sin and a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore, if the son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

I know that you are Abraham's descendants, Abraham's seed, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with my father and you do what you have seen with your father. They answered him and said, Abraham is our father.

We are the seed of Abraham. Jesus said, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. If you are the seed of Abraham, he doesn't say you would have the faith of Abraham.

He said you would do the works of Abraham. Your life would bear out the kind of forward thinking and action that's a reason for you to be Abraham's children, the result of living faith that Abraham had. If you were truly a son of Abraham, you would act like Abraham.

You would be Isaac and not Ishmael. You would be Jacob and not Esau. You've got the birth, but you don't have, you're not a son in deed.

You're not a son in the true sense of the word. Now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

You do the deeds of your father and so forth. I'm saying it's not enough to be a physical descendant. If you are truly a descendant of Abraham, you're going to do what Abraham did.

You're not only going to believe that there's a God and trust in God. Keep in mind here that Jesus is talking to Old Testament saints. It's Old Testament salvation we're talking about here.

This is not church age. We're not talking about the things that pertain to us. We're talking about the Old Testament criteria of salvation, which is Hebrews 11.6. He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him.

These folks believe in God. They believe in Abraham and so forth, but they don't do the works of Abraham. And Jesus says, if you were Abraham's descendants, you would do what Abraham did.

So this is lifestyle. This is your priorities and your actions and your decisions after you believe in God. And again, the context tells us up in verse 30 and 31, as he spoke these words, many believed in him.

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him and everything here that follows is being spoken to Jews who believe in him. But they fall apart at a certain point. And he says, you know, you're of your father, the devil, instead of your father, Abraham.

You ought to be acting like Abraham, but you're doing the same kind of rejection. By the way, we talk about their father, the devil. Are we saying that they're unbelievers? We tend to say, you

know, your father, the devil, you must be an unbeliever.

What was the situation with Satan? What was the idea there? He was the greatest of God's creatures and he dwelt in the throne room of God. And he was a son of God in the sense of the heavenly creation, prehistoric heavenly creation. And what did he do? He was with God and rejected, right? He started well and then bailed out.

And of course, he's the classic case of, in his case, he's going to wind up in the lake of fire because this is a rejection of God that goes way beyond rejecting the word of God or the plan of God or the calling of God. This is rejecting God entirely. But this is the pattern you follow.

Are you going to follow the pattern of Abraham and do the works of Abraham? Or are you going to follow the pattern of Satan and start out where you're supposed to be and end up where you're not supposed to be? So that's what we have in John chapter eight. And when you look at this, he says, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. Now, one of two things has to be true.

If this is truly talking about salvation, then we have to believe in perseverance of the saints. We have to believe that if you're saved, you're going to do the works. That it's going to come out and you'll automatically, by virtue of salvation, do good works.

Because Jesus says, if you were the seed of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham. And people have taken this again to be perseverance of the saints, that if you're saved, your life must manifest fruit. You will start on an upward trend in your holiness.

There's no possibility of a truly saved person being a reprobate. And if that's how you're going to understand this passage, then you have to believe in perseverance of the saints. You have to take that extra step.

If being seed of Abraham is a synonym for salvation, then the seed of Abraham does the works of Abraham, and anybody that's saved will do good works and won't be a reprobate. You see the point I'm making here? You have to make a choice in this passage, one or the other, because that's what naturally follows. If this is talking about salvation, seed of Abraham equals eternal salvation, then doing the works of Abraham means you must produce righteous acts as a believer.

That's what Jesus said. If you were the seed of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham. Does that make sense? Seed of Abraham equals saved.

Saved people do the works of Abraham, which is obedience, worship, upward progress. My contention is that this follows the same pattern we've seen in Hebrews and in Romans. And what we're talking about here is these people who are believers, from verse 30 and 31, they believe Jesus, believe his words, and he says, you've got to abide in my words so that you will be

disciples indeed.

If you're going to be a disciple indeed, this is Abraham category. Abraham is a follower indeed. He's a son indeed.

Not only is he saved, but he's productive. He receives the blessing and the promise and the inheritance. If you want to believe and be in the Abraham category, abide in my word, you will know the truth, the truth will set you free, you'll be free from the power of sin, ultimately in this age we're free from the authority of the law when we abide in the word of Christ.

The Son can make you free, you'll be free indeed. So that's the message there in John chapter 8. Now let's go back to Romans and quickly review Romans chapter 4 verse 12 in this light and in this context. In Romans 4 verse 12, what was the sign of the covenant with Abraham? To be a seed of Abraham and be the true heir and descendant of Abraham, what was the sign of the covenant? It was circumcision, right? Circumcision is the mark of being the seed of Abraham.

So in Romans 4 and verse 11, this whole chapter talks about Abraham. It says he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised. That he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.

We know from our study in Romans this whole discussion is about living righteousness. You don't have to be circumcised to be saved. You didn't have to be circumcised to be saved in the Old Testament.

The covenant is a covenant of blessing. It's a covenant of function and the fulfillment of purpose in God's plan. This entire discussion about Abraham, the whole point Paul's making here is Abraham was saved a long time ago.

But when he got circumcised and God made that promise, this is what was going on. It's righteousness by faith. When Abraham believed God, it was credited to him for righteousness and that fulfills God's purpose.

That's what we're supposed to do, believe God on a daily basis. Every time we do that, it's righteousness by faith and it fulfills God's purpose. The sign in the Old Testament of that descendancy from Abraham and that participation in the covenant was circumcision.

So through that he's the father of all those who believe in verse 11. He is, in verse 12, he's the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but also those who walk in the steps of faith, which our father Abraham had even when he was uncircumcised. What are the steps? Are there steps of faith to be saved? Are there several steps that you take and then you're saved? They're not, are there? If you try to take these passages of salvation, you run into impasse after impasse after impasse and crux after crux after crux because now you wind up

having to persevere for salvation.

You wind up having to take steps and follow steps of faith to be saved. It just does not work. But when we understand that this is our calling after salvation, there are steps.

It does require endurance. It does require perseverance to be like the apostle Paul and not a reprobate. We walk in the steps of the faith, which our father Abraham had even when he was uncircumcised.

The whole point Paul's making is that it wasn't the act of circumcision that God declared righteous. God declared Abraham righteous even before he was circumcised. Every time Abraham believed God, when he made a promise about the land or about children or about being the father of many nations or whatever, God credited it to him for righteousness and Abraham fulfilled his purpose in the Old Testament.

That's the promise of Abraham. God's promise is righteousness by faith. That's what we're talking about here.

And we are the seed of Abraham. The point here is we're descendants of Abraham in the spiritual sense. Every time we believe the promises of God, every time we trust the Word of God and live a life as a believer that reflects faith and trust in God, we are the seed of Abraham at that point.

And this entire chapter talks about that. In verse 13, the promise, notice in verse 13, is not the promise of salvation, not the promise of deliverance from sin and so forth. This is the promise that he would be the heir of the world, that he would inherit land and children and descendants and so forth.

It wasn't to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Verse 16, it is of faith so that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, 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. Verse 18, contrary to hope, he believed in hope so that he became the father of many nations.

Not so that he was saved, but so that he received a blessing, received a reward. Okay? That's the point that we get in Romans chapter 4. This we've seen in Romans chapter 9, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. The word of promise is this time next year I will come and Sarah shall have a son.

Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3 as we wind up this section. Galatians chapter 3. Galatians chapter 3 verse 26, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 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,

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. Okay? Now that last, when we first look at this we say, well look, it says right there, if you're saved, you're Abraham's seed, I mean that's a clincher.

That's it. Okay? Look at the way the covenant worked in the Old Testament. Just by virtue of being born a Jew, you had access to the promise, right? You were the physical descendant of Abraham, you had one leg up to receiving the, all of the promises to Abraham, inheriting the land and everything else, right? But you could lose it, couldn't you? Look at Esau.

What happened to Esau? He was a descendant, he was circumcised, did he get the inheritance? He did not. But it was accessible to him, he had it and he lost it, he sold it for a mess of pottage. You are Christ, you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

That last phrase is the critical thing. He doesn't say you are Abraham's seed and heirs, period, does he? He says you're heirs according to the promise. What is the promise? The promise is, if you pursue and if you live a life of faith, if you achieve righteousness by faith and follow the steps of faith that Abraham trod, you will receive the inheritance.

You're an heir according to the promise. Have you ever seen these movies where, there was one with Richard Pryor or something, or maybe it was, who's the guy that gets no respect, Rodney Dangerfield? There have been several movies with this premise, that some very rich relative is leaving this huge inheritance to someone, but they have to meet a condition. They have to, in one case I think they were given a million dollars and they had to spend every cent of it by a certain deadline, and if they didn't get all the money spent then they wouldn't inherit the rest of the fortune.

There was another one that, you know, there are all these different premises. They're an heir of this tremendous fortune if they meet this condition. If they don't meet the condition and the clock strikes midnight, you know at the end of the movie they always walk in just as the second hand is ticking up to the twelfth, they meet the condition and they get the full inheritance.

Well what if all of these obstacles had been successful in keeping them from getting there by the deadline? They're heirs according to the promise of the will. They didn't meet the condition of the will, they miss out. You've got to meet the condition to be an heir.

And that's why this says, it doesn't just say heirs period, it's heirs according to the promise. The promise says, I will honor those who honor me. If you follow the steps of Abraham you will inherit a blessing.

If you fail, and it's right there, go back and read the original promise in Genesis 17. If you disregard these things you'll be cut off from your people. You may still be a physical descendant of Abraham but you don't inherit.

That's according to promise and you need to underline that phrase because you're an heir, yes, but you're an heir according to the promise. And the promise says there's a condition to be fulfilled and if you don't fulfill it, I promise you, you're not going to inherit. That's the promise.

Turn over a page to 425 of Galatians. Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children but the Jerusalem above is free which is the mother of us all. And look at verse 28.

We brethren as Isaac was are children of promise as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the spirit even so it is now. What does the scripture say? Cast out the bond woman and her son for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. That's the promise.

That's a part of this promise. If you're a son of the bond woman and you stay a son of the bond woman and by analogy, if you go back and try to do righteousness by works, you put yourself under bondage to a false system and you won't inherit with the son of the free woman. So then brethren, we are not children of the bond woman but of the free.

And what's the conclusion he draws in 5.1? Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Keep on being a son of the free woman and do not be entangled with a yoke of bondage. You make the choice if you're a son of the free woman or a son of the bond woman.

That's why you have a command in 5.1. Stand fast in liberty. Don't get entangled in a yoke. If you get entangled in bondage, you're back as a son of the bond woman and you will not inherit.

That's the promise. You're an heir according to promise. That's the whole point of this illustration in the last part of Galatians 4 is to draw that contrast and to culminate in this admonition in 5.1. You've got to stand fast.

Don't be drawn back into righteousness by works. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to review and wrap up this point and we're going to see what the opposite side of the coin is.

We can be an heir, we can inherit a promise, or we can be in another category. We're going to complete this picture by seeing the other side of the coin when we come back. Let's pause and take our break.