

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 4
PREACHED ON JANUARY 18, 2026 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” 9 Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness.

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” 23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. ROMANS 4: 1-9, 16-25

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- There are some questions we must each ask ourselves. A question such as, What is the meaning of life? What are we on this earth for? What happens after death? How can we be saved? How do we face God in His final Day of Judgment? The Letter to the Roman Christians has answers to these questions. Paul has been teaching us about how God justifies sinners, how sinners can appear favorably before a just and holy God in His final Day of Judgment, and how they can be declared not guilty. We learned from this Letter from Paul that justification is by faith alone in Christ and not by works.

- Justification is a legal declaration by God, not a transformation of the person. It puts on us the righteousness of Christ and declares us as just people, but does not change us instantly to become sinless. God does not see us as if we were righteous in ourselves, but He sees us in Christ's righteousness.
- Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, shows that nothing we do can save us or put us right with God. Our best and worst works are useless. Religion and morality are useless. We deserve hell. Luther discovered in his life that justification is by faith alone in Christ.
- Luther, who was seen as "a good man" and a monk, was trying everything to go to heaven. He tried everything the Roman Catholic Church taught to earn salvation: fasting, sweating, praying, and counting his beads. Yet Luther remained miserable, unhappy, and increasingly conscious of his unworthiness and of God's holiness. The transformation came when Luther discovered the doctrine of justification by faith only. This is the very thing that changed him, and it led to the Protestant Reformation, which changed the whole situation and accounts so much for the history of the world ever since.
- Generally, the Jewish teachers, the rabbis, of Paul's day believed that Abraham was justified by his works, by keeping the law. Ancient passages from the rabbis say: "We find that Abraham our father had performed the whole Law before it was given," and "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord." The rabbis argued that Abraham kept the law perfectly before it was given, keeping it by intuition or anticipation.
- In Romans 4, Paul says that if works justified Abraham, he would have grounds to boast before God. But Scripture says **Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6)**. The word "counted," "imputed," "reckoned," or "credited" as used in other translations, means to put something to someone's account that they do not possess. God put Christ's righteousness to Abraham's account. Abraham possessed righteousness in the same manner as a person would have a sum of money placed in his account in a bank.
- This shows Abraham was justified by faith alone, just like we are today. Abraham's faith was in God's promise of salvation through the Messiah. Faith is merely the instrument through which we receive Christ's righteousness. The actual grounds of our salvation is Christ's righteousness, not our faith. The Apostle Paul does not say that Abraham was made righteous in all his doings; instead, God accounted Abraham as righteous. Our justification is not God making us perfectly righteous, but counting us as perfectly righteous. After we are counted righteous, then God begins making us truly righteous, culminating at our resurrection. We gradually become more like Jesus Christ.
- There is a significant relation between sinners' justification and Christ's resurrection. The resurrection is God's proclamation that He is fully and completely satisfied with the work that His Son did upon the cross. If Christ had not been raised, we could conclude that He was unable to bear the punishment for our sins. The resurrection declares that Christ's work of atonement is

complete and accepted by God. A believer no longer fears death, the grave, or even judgment, because he knows that he has passed from judgment unto life in Christ Jesus.

- Abraham's story isn't just a historical account but a pattern for all believers: What was true of Abraham is true of every man who has ever or will be reconciled to God. Abraham believed God's promise despite his own physical limitations, and Christians likewise believe God's word about Christ despite their sinfulness. As Abraham didn't consider his own body, now dead, Christians don't focus on their sinfulness but on God's promise. Abraham's faith was the template that shows how we are justified - not by works but by believing God's word.
- I want to consider Jesus' teaching with you today in Matthew 7, which will give us clarity on the differences between justification by works and justification by faith, which is the faith of Abraham. I am sure that Matthew 7 will provide us with further insight into God's justification. We will read from Matthew 7: 13-14, 21-23.

➤ JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH OR WORKS? A WARNING FROM JESUS.

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

- Jesus summarizes all forms of religion in this world into two: religion by works and religion by faith. The religion by works is false, and the one by faith is true. The religion by works includes Christians who put their justification in sacraments, their service in the church, obedience to the Ten Commandments, religious privileges, and natural birth and descent. These believers have made a profession or confirmation of faith, but they have added other things to Christ for their justification. The second form of religion is believers who are justified by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.
- Jesus then continued that the religion by works has many people practicing it, and the one by faith has few people. The religion by works is connected to the wide gate, and the one by faith is connected to the narrow gate. Also, the religion by works is connected to the broad way, and by faith is connected to the way which is narrow. Jesus then gave the final destiny of each of these 2 religions. Religion by works produces self-righteousness and eventually leads to eternal destruction or hell; the one by faith produces God's righteousness and leads to eternal life or heaven. It doesn't matter what name you call the religion by works; it is under the power of Satan. It may be called the Church of Jesus, Pella Reformed Church of Iowa, and promise heaven, but if the church falls under works religion, it is still under the power of the Devil. The true one is under the

power of God. Jesus contrasted the two religions, and I want to look at each contrast with you as it helps us understand Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

TWO FORMS OF RELIGION - Matthew 7: 13-14, 21-23

BY FAITH	BY WORKS
True Religion	False Religion
Under the Power of God	Under the Power of the Devil
You are justified by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.	<p>You believe that you are justified by your works, by contributing to your own salvation, including being good by what you do, such as:</p> <p>By taking the sacraments such as Confession, Confirmation, Communion, Baptism, Prayers. Beads, Candles, Church attendance, Fasting, etc.</p> <p>by obeying the Ten Commandments,</p> <p>by being born into a Christian family or a Christian nation,</p> <p>by their service in the church, volunteering, church attendance, etc.</p> <p>by their membership in a particular church or denomination,</p> <p>by their philanthropy, such as charitable gifts</p> <p>So, this includes people in the church who have made a profession of Faith, but they think they must add something to Jesus Christ to be saved.</p>
Few people join it	Many people are part of it
Narrow Gate	Broad Gate or Wide Gate
Narrow Way	Broad Way
Produces God's righteousness	Produces Self-righteousness
Leads to Heaven or Eternal Life	Leads to Hell or Eternal Death

➤ NARROW AND BROAD GATES & NARROW AND BROAD ROADS.

- Jesus started with a command to enter. This is an absolute command. I have had people tell me they admire the sermons I have preached, but they attach no seriousness to them. Jesus didn't invite people to stand and admire Him and His Words, but to act upon them, to enter. You can admire Jesus or admire His ethics.
- The teaching of Scripture is that every human being who has ever lived would be part of one of these two religions—if you don't enter the narrow gate, by default, you're going to find yourself entering through the broad gate.
- What is this narrow gate we are commanded to enter? It is salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. It is narrow because it doesn't include so many things. It is the gospel; it is all about Jesus Christ alone. Know who Jesus is, agree with who He is, and act upon that knowledge. This is how narrow it is to go to heaven.
- As I mentioned previously, each of us must repent and believe in Jesus, because we enter the kingdom alone. Your parents' faith doesn't save you; being born in a Christian-dominated nation doesn't grant you citizenship in heaven. You must personally enter this gate alone. You leave the world behind. You leave family and friends behind and enter alone.
- Entering alone can bring division among people. I recently broke away from one of my spiritual mentors to enter alone. Entering alone destroys relationships. Jesus said,

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.” Matthew 10:34-36.

- You have to break away from the crowd to enter alone, and even the most intimate people in your life, who are very frequently going to be your enemies.
- Because of the narrowness of this gate, you must enter by repentance. You must leave everything you held onto behind you, with nothing in your hands. You turn your back on everything. You can't go through the narrow gate with your baggage. You can't bring everything with you; you hold onto nothing. It calls for separation. It calls for obedience. It calls for sanctification. It promises persecution. You come on that way, and you essentially will battle all the way to glory.
- Religion by works is the wide gate, and can easily be found. You have to make a profession of faith without truly repenting and without having a saving faith in Jesus Christ. It has lots of crowds, no difficulty, no self-denial, because you can enter with your baggage, bring your sin, bring your self-will. No repentance, no surrender, no submission to Christ.
- They boast about being reformed because they want to have a little religion to fit in, but a religion that doesn't ask them to give up everything.

➤ TWO DESTINATIONS. HEAVEN AND HELL.

- The wide or broad way, in verse 13, "leads to destruction," which is hell; the narrow way "leads to life," which is heaven, and there are only those two ways. And there are only two groups of people who will appear before God on the Day of Judgment. There are "many" on the broad road, and "few" on the narrow.
- What will happen to the many on the broad road and wide gate? What will happen to people who tried to attain justification by works, sacraments, religious privileges, and the Law, without repentance and believing truly in Christ? What would happen to the group that didn't have true faith in Christ alone? Jesus tells us in verses 21 through 23. **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** Then Jesus continues to describe the fate of the many who entered through the wide gate and road. **"22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and, in Your name, perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!"**
- Those who identified with the church, who are many, but didn't have a genuine faith, the many that didn't repent and truly believed, the many who claimed to be reformed, were elect of God, quoted Scriptures, defined theological terms, but never submitted to Christ, will be sentenced to hell on the Day of Judgment. And they're going to say, **"Lord, Lord, we did do Your will. We prophesied in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles."** **"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**" Jesus said.
- Justification by works will get you rejected, and even though you lay claim to serving Him. They will say, "Lord, Lord". The repetition of that is fraught with a certain kind of passion, zeal, and orthodoxy. They will say to God, "We were associated with You and were known as believers, we were serving as elders, missionaries, and did it all for You." Justification by works is a false religion; it doesn't show the fruits of a true saving faith, which is repentance and obedience. No sanctification takes place in such a religion, as stated in verse 23.
- These are people who outwardly identify with Christ, but whose lives were not marked by righteousness because they lacked saving faith. Their profession of faith is valueless. They may call Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but never submit to Him. We learn that it is not the profession of faith, it's the reality that matters, and it is acting on the Word of God.
- As a Christian, you must have all three elements of faith in your life: knowledge of Christ, agreement with Him, and living your life in obedience to Him, trust Him. False Christians have a mere intellectual assent or easy "believism." There is the heresy of "sandimanism," which teaches that as long as you say that Jesus is Lord, as long as you say you believe, you are saved. True faith involves the whole person - intellect, emotions, and will - not just verbal agreement.

➤ CONCLUSION

- What is the meaning of life? What happens after death? How can we be saved? We have Abraham as an example of a man who lived a meaningful life and died well because he was saved. The story of Abraham shows how to be justified before God. It was not by works but by believing in God. Abraham is the pattern for all the faithful. Abraham glorified God by considering who and what God is. He contemplated God's attributes - His eternity, majesty, glory, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, righteousness, truth, holiness, and unchangeability.
- From these attributes, Abraham deduced that God never makes promises lightly or thoughtlessly. God never changes His mind, and God can perform what He promises. Based on this knowledge of God's character, Abraham concluded that nothing else mattered - not his aged body, not Sarah's barrenness - because God had spoken and would fulfill His promise.
- We must believe what God says about Jesus, though it seems too good to be true. God says Jesus is His Son who died for our sins and was raised to life. God says He has laid our sins on Jesus and punished them in Him. He offers forgiveness, new life, adoption, and eternal glory. We must believe.
- Abraham believed despite circumstances. We must believe despite our age, past sins, present feelings, or anything else. We don't need to understand; we have to believe. We must stop relying on ourselves in any way for salvation. We will be judged by God's standard, not our own. Abraham believed God's promise despite circumstances, and we must believe in Jesus's sacrifice for our sins despite our circumstances. Justifying faith believes God's word despite our own sinfulness and weakness. Faith is ultimately about keeping our eyes steadfastly on God rather than on ourselves or our problems.
- Justifying faith gives us confidence to stand before God, despite our sins and circumstances. We can have assurance of salvation because of what God has done through Jesus, not because of anything in us. Our salvation is secure precisely because it depends on God's grace, not our works. Our salvation is sure because it's founded on the character of God Himself. Our salvation is guaranteed in His everlasting and eternal grace. If our salvation depended on our abilities or faithfulness, we would all fail. Jesus said in **John 10:28, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."** The believers' security comes from being in God's hand, not from our grasp of Him.
- But how can someone know if they are truly a Christian? How can you tell if you are on the narrow way and passing through the narrow gate? A true Christian is someone who has ceased altogether to look at himself and is looking only and entirely and utterly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The true Christian realizes they can do nothing to make themselves a Christian and has ceased attempting to do so. The moment someone thinks they must pray more, read more, feel more conviction, or do anything to make themselves more acceptable to God, they

haven't truly understood justification. As a true believer, you would read your Bible thoroughly to gain a deeper understanding of God's character and promises. You will study examples of faith in Scripture, such as Abraham, and in Hebrews 11.

- The true believer will meditate on what they have learned and keep on speaking to themselves about it. They will develop a personal knowledge of God through prayer and spending time in His presence. They will apply God's Word in practical situations and will pursue holiness and obedience.
- There are promises when you come to God through faith, not by works.
 - a. You have complete forgiveness of sins - "all is blotted out."
 - b. You are justified - "I will pronounce you to be just in My sight."
 - c. You have a new birth - "I will give you a new life...a new nature."
 - d. You have adoption - "I will adopt you into My family...make you My child."
 - e. You have the indwelling Holy Spirit - "I will put My Holy Spirit into you."
 - f. You have divine guidance - "I will lead you and guide you."
 - g. You have providence - "All things work together for good."
 - h. You have eternal glory - "I will bring you into the glory that I Myself have prepared for you."
 - i. You will have resurrection - "I'll raise your body and I'll glorify it."
- Do you know what the meaning of life is? Are you prepared for what will happen after your death? Are you already justified before God? Are you saved?
- Paul says in **2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourself, whether you be in the faith."** You must examine yourself to see if you have come to the Lord in faith or by works. This is the most important thing you can ever know about yourself if you do a thorough examination. Are you justified by faith or by works? Are you on the narrow road to heaven or on the broad road to hell?
- We are called to examine ourselves, whether we are justified by faith, but how do we do that? You may be involved in the church all your life, in a Sunday school class, a Bible study, a Christian group, but that is not a true examination of yourself. You may be involved in the discussions of Scripture and theology as a curiosity or academic pursuit, but that is not a true self-examination.
- Have you repented of your sins? Do you know Jesus Christ and His work for sinners like you? Do you agree with who He is and what He has done? Have you submitted to Him, trusted Him, and committed your life to obeying Him the rest of your life? This is what true examination of yourself looks like.
- Let us pray.