

THE PROMISE IS OF FAITH BY GRACE

Romans 4:16-25

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

17. "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

When Abraham was justified before God, he had no Bible to guide him. He had no law. He had no ceremony. He had no sign. He had nothing but faith! This clearly shows us that faith does not depend upon anything other than the pure, unadulterated grace of God.

Galatians 2:21 says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Theologically, we may substitute any other thing or idea for the word "law" in this verse. If righteousness could come by baptism, then Christ is dead in vain. If righteousness could come by ethical struggling, then Christ is dead in vain.

If righteousness could come by any manner of form, ceremony, or liturgy, then Christ is dead in vain. If righteousness could be imparted by any priest, pastor, rabbi, teacher, or other religious leader, or by any particular church name or denomination, then Christ is dead in vain.

If you try to gain entrance to Heaven by any means other than through Christ Jesus, you will be cursed.

Galatians 3:10 says, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them!'"

And James 2:10 says, "Whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all."

And the first requirement of the law (which we have all miserably failed at) is recorded in Mark 12:30, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

These verses clearly establish that there is no such thing

as a moderate sinner or a partial sinner. There are no halfways with God - a person is either saved or lost. He or she is under the blessing of salvation or under the curse of the law; is declared righteous by grace or declared accursed by the law. There is no other position possible. There is no halfway position between the two, and there is no third position outside the two.

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18. "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be."

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

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

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

Hope began for us the very moment that Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. God did not leave them hopeless for even a moment. Even as he was sending them forth into a life of hardship and misery, he gave them the promise of Christ in Genesis 3:15.

Speaking to the serpent, God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This was a picture of the cross.

There is in Paris a famous picture by Zwiller called "The First Night Outside Paradise." Our first parents have been driven out of the Garden of Eden and are preparing to spend the first night in the desert beyond.

In the distance can be discerned the figure of the angel with the flaming sword, but the eyes of the exiles are not fixed on him. They are gazing far above his head, and there, outlined in light - faint, but unmistakable - the artist has painted a cross. In wondering awe their gaze is fastened on it.

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D.L. Moody, the great evangelist of the last century, whose name is commemorated by Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, left us a short but overwhelming statement of hope as he neared the end of his life.

Realizing that he would soon be gone from this world one day, Moody said to a friend, "Someday you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it.

"At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone higher, that is all - out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that sin cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned into His glorious body.

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"I was born in the flesh in 1837; I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die; that which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

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22. "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

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

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

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

Like most people these days, when the first of the month rolls around, one of my most pressing duties is to sit down and write out some checks to pay all the bills that have arrived courtesy of the United States Postal Service during the month.

In the past, my method has been to do this for all the bills except the one from Commonwealth Edison. I took that one to the bank to pay it in person so that I could also pick-up the free light bulbs that Edison supplies at the same time.

I would walk up to the teller and hand her the bill and my money. The teller would check the money to make sure it was the correct amount, and then she would take a rubber stamp, press it on an ink pad, and stamp the "receipt" half of the bill and hand it back to me.

The bill is paid. Edison can never collect that particular bill from me again. If their computer burped and they tried to collect a bill twice, I would produce the stamped receipt and they would have to acknowledge that the bill had been paid and correct their computer.

It would cause them no end of headaches to get the computer straightened out, but they would have no choice: I have the stamped receipt and there is nothing else they could do. The matter would be completely cleared up and I would be free from that obligation forever.

The Lord Jesus walked up to Calvary, which was God's desk for the payment of the bill for our sins. The account was heavy against us, and the Lord Jesus Christ could settle the account only by shedding His blood in dying for us. There was no other way in which the account could be settled.

He offered up His life, and God the Father took that life, handed it over to His justice for execution, while His holiness turned away from the scene, leaving the Savior alone to cry out, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"

When the three hours of daylight and the three hours of darkness were ended, the payment had been made in full. Those hours were eternal as far as God is concerned. It is He who does not reckon time as we count it, but for whom a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as but a day.

For God the Father and God the Son, those six hours were as all the days and all the nights of all the years of all eternity. Christ paid the eternal punishment of every one of those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He paid your punishment and He paid my punishment.

His followers took His body and reverently cared for it, putting it in the tomb, wrapping it in linen with the myrrh that was the symbol of death. But it was not possible that the Lord Jesus Christ could be held by death.

He had paid the complete debt, and the Lord God Almighty reached out, as a teller might stamp a bill paid in full, and raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead, as the sign that there was nothing more to pay.

Jesus paid it all! All to Him I owe! Sin had left a crimson stain! He washed it white as snow! We sing that with joy - Jesus paid it all - and it is the truth about the death

of Christ upon the cross. He paid it all, and the resurrection is the receipt for the bill!

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Romans was written by Paul while he was a guest of Gaius, a Corinthian Christian. Sitting in Gaius' house, Paul dictated this epistle saying that Christ was delivered up and that he was raised up.

All this occurred about twenty-five years before Paul sat there dictating the epistle about it. It occurred on Calvary's hill outside of Jerusalem.

Only one or two years before, Paul had written his first epistle to the Corinthians. I Corinthians 15:6 states, "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."

Thus, as Paul was dictating his epistle to the Romans, there were at that very moment about five hundred known living people, at least, who had seen our risen Lord with open eyes and had heard him with conscious ears.

From one point of view, all was eternal, spiritual, and invisible. From another point of view, though, our salvation was as concrete, as historical, as much a thing of place and date, as the first astronaut's walk on the moon, or the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

And what was done, remains done!

Jesus was delivered up because of our offences, our sins, and our transgressions. And because God justified us, and counted the bill as paid in full, forever, the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead!

Hallelujah! Amen!

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