

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE
EXAMPLE

OF
JUSTIFICATION

WITNESS LEE

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE
EXAMPLE
OF
JUSTIFICATION

WITNESS LEE

Living Stream Ministry
Anaheim, CA • www.lsm.org

THE EXAMPLE OF JUSTIFICATION

I love the book of Romans because it was written in a solid and substantial way. Although this book covers many doctrines, it was actually written according to facts and experiences. The book of Romans is based on experience. Justification may appear to be a doctrinal matter, but the Apostle Paul, along with the doctrine of justification, gives us a living example of it—the person of Abraham ([4:1-25](#)). In this booklet we will consider Abraham, the example of justification. He is our model, our pattern. The name Abraham means “father of a multitude.” According to the Scriptures, Abraham was the father of both the Jews and the believing Gentiles ([Rom. 4:11-12, 16-17](#); [Gal. 3:7-9, 29](#)). Whoever is of faith, whether Jew or Gentile, is a descendant of Abraham.

THE CALLED ONE

Abraham was the called one. Adam was created, but Abraham was called. There is a great difference between being created and being called.

The book of Genesis is divided into two main sections: the first section covers the first ten and one-half chapters and relates the history of the created race, with Adam as the father and head; the second section covers from the middle of chapter eleven through the end of the book and relates the history of the called race, with Abraham as the father and head. The history of the created race as recorded in Genesis culminates in the building of the tower and city of Babel (Babylon in Greek). Names of idols were written on this tower, meaning that the whole created race had turned to idolatry. Thus, Paul says the human race had exchanged God for idols (1:23, 25).

Paul wrote Romans 1 according to the history narrated in Genesis. Beginning with the time of Cain, man disapproved of holding God in his full knowledge and gave Him up. Mankind forsook God and built the city of Enoch, the first human culture as recorded in Genesis 4. With that culture the human race descended into corruption and remained in a state of corruption until the flood came as God's judgment upon them. By God's mercy, eight persons were saved through the ark, which typified Christ. The number eight is the number of resurrection, indicating that these people were saved and preserved

in resurrection. In a sense, Noah was the head of a new race. However, not long afterward the descendants of Noah also gave up God at Babel in [Genesis 11](#). When they exchanged God for idols, the forsaking of God was complete. The giving up of God was not completed before the flood; it was completed afterward by the descendants of Noah, who fell into idolatry.

Fornication followed idolatry. After Babel, Sodom emerged. Sodom was a city of fornication. In the English language we have the words sodomy and sodomites, which signify the most shameful acts of fornication. The inhabitants of Sodom violated their own nature and caused great confusion. At the time of [Genesis 19](#), the human race, which had exchanged God for idols, had fallen into sodomy. As a result, every kind of wickedness burst forth.

This was the background of [Romans 1](#). This chapter was written according to the history of the human fall: disapproving of holding God, exchanging God for idols, falling into fornication, and producing every kind of wickedness.

During the terrible process of the fall, mankind exchanged God for idols and completely abandoned Him. In return, God also forsook mankind. God seemed to say, “Since you have given

Me up, I will let you go.” The created race gave up God, and God gave up the created race.

However, God called out of this race one man with his wife. God had no intention of calling a third person. His intention was to call one complete person, which includes a man and wife. If you are an unmarried man, you are incomplete. Without your wife, you are an incomplete person; you need her to complement you. Together you are a complete entity. Therefore, God called Abraham with his wife as one complete person.

We may think of ourselves as not being very absolute for God. However, Abraham, our believing father and model, was not absolute himself. When he was called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, he not only brought his wife, but other relatives as well.

God called Abraham by appearing to him as the God of glory ([Acts 7:2-3](#)). God did not call him by mere words; He called him by His glory. Abraham saw the glory of God and was attracted.

Our experience is the same. In a sense, we also have seen the glory of God. When we heard the gospel and it penetrated us, we saw the glory of God. Did you not see the glory of God at the time you were saved? I saw it when I was an

ambitious young man. I had no intention of receiving God, but as the gospel penetrated into me I could not help saying, “God, I want You.” I could not deny that the glory of God had appeared to me. Such an experience is indefinable. No human words can adequately describe what we saw when the gospel penetrated our being. We can only say that the God of glory appeared to us, attracting us and calling us. We, like Abraham, were called by the God of glory.

Abraham was the same as we are. We should not think that we are different from him. We should not appreciate Abraham and deprecate ourselves, for we are all on the same level. We are all Abraham. Abraham was not outstanding. When I heard the story of Abraham as a child, I thought he was extraordinary. However, as I read the Word in later years, I realized that there is little difference between Abraham and me, that we are nearly the same. Although Abraham had been called by God, he did not have the boldness to leave the land of idolatry, forcing God to use Abraham’s father to bring him out of Ur. Abraham was the called one, but his father initiated the actual departure. They left Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in Haran. However, when Abraham still was not bold enough to follow God

absolutely, God was forced to take his father. His father died in Haran, and God called Abraham the second time.

Abraham's first call is recorded in [Acts 7:2-4](#); the second call is found in [Genesis 12:1](#). We should note the difference between these two calls. According to [Acts 7:2](#), God called Abraham out of two things—his country and his kindred. According to [Genesis 12:1](#), another item is added—his father's house. The first call asked Abraham to leave his country and his people; the second call asked him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. Abraham and his wife had to go out alone. God took away Abraham's father and He did not want him to take any other relative with him.

If we consider what Abraham did, we will realize that we are not the only ones who are not absolute in obeying the Lord's call. Our father Abraham was the first to follow God without being absolute. He felt lonely. He did not want to leave by himself. Thus, he took his nephew Lot with him. This violated God's call. Although Abraham answered the Lord's call, his answer, at least in part, disobeyed that call. Likewise, nearly all of us have answered God's call; yet in our answer we acted contrary to His call. None of

us has answered God's call in an absolute way. Nevertheless, God is absolute. Regardless of how unabsolute we are, God will fulfill His call.

Abraham loved Lot. God used him to discipline Abraham. Eventually, Lot separated from Abraham and Abraham followed God's call absolutely. He no longer had his father or his nephew. He was alone with his wife. He had left his country, his kindred, and his father's house. However, Abraham had to leave one more thing—himself. He held on to himself.

We know Abraham still clung to himself by his reaction to Sarah's suggestion that he have a child by Hagar. Although this proposal was made with a good intention, it was against God's call. Abraham should have exercised discernment and not have listened to his wife. Sarah's suggestion was a test to prove that Abraham remained in his old self, that part of him was still the old creation. God's intention, however, was to call Abraham completely out of every part of the old creation—not only out of his country, kindred, and father's house, but also out of himself. It seemed that God was telling Abraham, "You should not do anything. You must come out of yourself. I will do everything for you. But I cannot do anything while you remain in yourself."

Nevertheless, Abraham acted upon Sarah's proposal, and the result was Ishmael. That was a very serious mistake, and the Jews continue to suffer from it. Why did Abraham make such an error? Because he was still in himself. He had forsaken many other things, but he had not forsaken himself.

When did Abraham leave himself? He forsook himself when he was a hundred years old, at which time he considered himself as good as dead. To be sure, every dead person has come out of himself. At the age of a hundred, Abraham looked at himself and said, "I am finished. I am as good as dead." [Romans 4:19](#) says, "he considered his own body already become dead." This indicated that he had finally emerged from himself. He had become a fully called person. Have you been called? Although you are a called person, you have not yet forsaken yourself.

As we have seen, the created race had degenerated to such an extent that they exchanged God for idols. God was unable to do anything with them. As far as God was concerned, the created race under the headship of Adam was hopeless, and He gave it up completely. However, out of that created and fallen race God called out Abraham to be the father and head of a new race,

the called race. To which race do we belong—the created race or the called race? We belong to the called race. However, we are the same as our father Abraham. We, like him, are reacting to the Lord's call step by step, not absolutely. We are all in the process of responding to God's call. Regardless of how weak you are, I am assured that eventually you will be called out. Nevertheless, you should hasten your calling and forsake everything that is not God Himself. The faster you move on, the better. I encourage you to speed up. Come out of everything that is not God.

THE BELIEVING ONE

The called race becomes the believing race. Abraham was first a called one, then a believing one. He had abandoned everything and had no way to go on except to trust in God. He trusted in God because he did not know where he was going. God had only told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He did not tell Abraham where he was going, forcing him to trust in God. Abraham could say, "I simply trust in God. I go wherever He leads me." If we study the history of Abraham, we will learn that his life was a trusting life, a believing life. God did not expect Abraham to do anything.

God seemed to tell him, “Abraham, you have been called by Me. Don’t do anything. I’ll do everything for you. Just stay with Me. When I move, you move. You must go wherever I go. Don’t do anything for yourself or by yourself.” This is what it means to trust in God.

Many people have the mistaken impression that believing in the Lord Jesus is simply saying, “Lord Jesus, I believe in You. I take You as my Savior.” This is right, but the implications are far-reaching. It means that we must terminate ourselves, admitting that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. Every step and every moment we must trust in Him. I do not know how to do things; I only know how to trust in my Lord. I have been called out of everything that is not God and now I believe into everything that is God. I believe in Him and I believe in all that He has accomplished for me. I believe in what He can do for me and in what He shall do for me. I put my full trust in Him. This is the testimony of the called and believing race. As children of Abraham, the believing father, we are a believing people ([Gal. 3:7-9](#)).

God Who Calls Things Not Being as Being

In what kind of God did Abraham believe?

Who is the God in whom we believe? The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who calls things not being as being (4:17). The God of Abraham calls things not existing as existing, meaning that He creates things out of nothing. God is the Creator. Abraham believed in such a God and applied this God to his situation. In a sense, Abraham was unable to produce an heir. Nevertheless, God called Isaac into being. Although Isaac had no being, God called him into being. When Isaac did not exist and when there was no possibility for him to exist, God declared, “There shall be an Isaac.” Isaac was born; God had called something not being as being. We must believe in the same God, for He is the almighty Creator who calls things not existing as existing.

God Who Gives Life to the Dead

The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who gives life to the dead (4:17). This means that God can resurrect the dead. Abraham experienced this when God asked him to offer up Isaac. Abraham obeyed. As Abraham offered Isaac, he believed that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). He believed

that God would give life to his son and that he would have his son again in resurrection.

We need to believe in the Lord Jesus in the same way. We believe in God the Creator, who calls things not being as being. We also believe in Him as the life-giver, as the One who can raise the dead. He can create out of nothing, and He can give life to the dead.

We may apply this to the church life. You may feel that the situation in your local church is poor. Yes, it is very poor; in fact, it is nothing. You must say to the Lord, “Lord, come in to call things not being as being.” Perhaps you may migrate to a certain locality and find that it is a place filled with death. That is the reason God sent you. You must believe in Him as the One who gives life to the dead.

In 1949 I was sent to Taiwan. I thought of that island as a backward region. I had been living and working in Shanghai, the largest city in the Far East, where the Lord’s work was strong. A thousand saints were meeting together. We had seventeen homes for meetings and four publications. Suddenly I was removed from mainland China and sent to the little island of Taiwan. When I surveyed the situation, I was deeply disappointed. I could not do anything and I did not

want to do anything. I had no appetite to work in such a backward country with its poor people. I lay on the bed and looked at the ceiling, saying to myself, “What are you doing here? Why did you come here?” Then I turned to my wife and asked, “Why did we come? What can we do?” I was very troubled, and my wife had no word to help me. One day, the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead touched my heart, telling me not to be disappointed. After that, I was burdened for the work on Taiwan. In less than five years we grew in numbers from three hundred and fifty people to twenty thousand. During the first year we increased almost thirty-fold. Many who were saved during that time are now co-workers.

We must believe in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead. Do not be disappointed by the situation in your locality. Do not say that everything is poor and dead. Such a place is the right place for you and the right place for God. Is it poor? You have a rich God who calls things not being as being. Is it dead? You have a living God who gives life to the dead. Your situation gives an opportunity for God to come in and impart life to the dead. Do not complain. Call on Him and believe in

Him. Do not be disappointed with your family situation. Do not say that your wife is poor or that your husband is dead. The more you say that your wife is poor, the worse she is. The more you say that your husband is dead, the worse he is. You must declare, “My wife is poor, but my God is not poor. My husband is dead, but my God is not dead. The God in whom I believe is the God who creates things out of nothing and who gives life to the dead. My God does not give life to the living—He gives life to the dead. My situation is an excellent opportunity for God.”

HIS FAITH RECKONED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

This kind of faith is reckoned by God as righteousness ([4:3, 22](#)). The more we thus believe in God, the greater is the sensation that God is pleased with us. This is the righteousness of God reckoned to us as the issue of our faith. Faith is the living Christ Himself. When Christ comes into us as the believing One, He is our faith. Then God reckons our faith as righteousness. Thus, we have both faith and righteousness. This means that we are gaining more of Christ. We have Him as our faith and our righteousness. He is the faith by which we believe in Him and the

righteousness which God reckons to us. He is our everything. The more we believe in Him, the more we gain of Him. The more we believe in Him, the more God gives Him to us.

CIRCUMCISION RECEIVED AS A SEAL

The faith reckoned to Abraham as righteousness did not depend on the outward form of circumcision, because circumcision came later. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision (4:11). Circumcision, as an outward form, was a seal of the inward reality. If we do not have the reality, we should forget the outward form. If we have the reality, we may occasionally need an outward form as the seal. Circumcision was such a seal to Abraham. Moreover, it was a seal to the believing Gentiles, the uncircumcision, of whom Abraham was also the father.

MADE THE FATHER OF FAITH

Therefore, Abraham became the father of faith (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9, 29). He was the father of the uncircumcision who have the same faith (4:11) and of the circumcision who walk in the steps of the same faith (4:12). Abraham was the

father of two groups of people—the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. If you believe in the Lord, Abraham is your father. All the believers in Christ are his descendants.

THE PROMISE GIVEN FOR HIM AND HIS SEED TO BE THE HEIRS OF THE WORLD

The promise was given to Abraham and his seed that they should be heirs of the world ([4:13](#)). This is a great matter. Abraham and his descendants have inherited God, and they will also inherit the world. Let other people fight for the control of the world. The world will be ours. After the wars are over, God will say, “Let My people have the world.” This promise was not given through the works of the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Who will inherit the earth? Those who have been called and believe in the Lord Jesus, those who have Christ as their faith and as their righteousness. Be assured that the world will be ours. We do not need to fight or strive. We simply need to believe in the mighty acts of God. Every day I read the international news to see what God is doing, especially in the Middle East. It is wonderful to be living in this age, an age of God’s activity. God is not only

acting on behalf of the Jews, but also on our behalf. One day the world will belong to all the believing heirs of Abraham.

Do you believe this? I have the complete confidence that one day we shall inherit the earth. We should expect to inherit the world. The Bible does assure us that we shall inherit the world. Christ Himself is eager to come back and recover the earth. He is far more interested in the earth than in the heavens. The Lord will return to take the earth not only for Himself, but also for us. We are the heirs of the promise, and we shall inherit the world.

This booklet is compiled from
Life-study of Romans
© 1984 Living Stream Ministry

Please feel free to share this eBooklet with others.

See more titles in this series at
www.lsm.org/booklets.

SEE LINKS TO PURCHASE

Life-study of Romans

AUDIOBOOK • EBOOK • PRINT

Purchase *Life-study of Romans*

Click on the badge for the format you wish to purchase.

Audiobook

available at



eBook



available at
amazon

Print

