

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

**SUBJECTIVE
JUSTIFICATION**

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Living Stream Ministry
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Romans 4 is a deep chapter revealing God's subjective and dispositional justification through the history of Abraham. If we enter into the depths of this chapter, we will see it reveals that adequate, living justification is God's deeper work in calling fallen people out of everything other than God and bringing them back to Himself. God created man for Himself and to Himself. However, man fell. The meaning of the fall of man is to be kept from God by anything that is not God. The man who had been created to God fell away from God to other things. It does not matter whether a thing is good or bad. As long as it is not God and it keeps man from God, it constitutes a fall. In God's justification, God calls the fallen man out of everything back to Himself. Therefore, when God called Abraham, He did not tell him where he should go, because His intention was to bring Abraham back to Himself. Moment after moment and step after step, Abraham's heart had to cleave to God. He had to trust in God for every move, not leaving His

presence for a moment. In other words, Abraham had to be one with God.

After God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, God trained Abraham to believe in Him. Believing in God means to believe into God and to make ourselves one with God. In this kind of believing, a man admits that he is nothing, that he has nothing, and that he can do nothing. He agrees that he must be terminated. From the time we first believe in Him, we should not be anything. We should be completely terminated and allow God to be everything in us. This is the accurate meaning of circumcision.

When a person has been called by God in this way, the living God transfuses Himself into him. This word transfuse is important in describing what transpires at God's calling. The living God spontaneously transfuses Himself into the called one. As a result, he is attracted by God and to God. Unconsciously, some element, some essence of the living God is transfused into him, and he reacts to God by believing in Him. This reaction is faith.

When you heard the gospel of glory regarding the Lord Jesus, you repented. This means that God called you out of everything other than Himself. At that moment, without your even

knowing it, the living Christ in His gospel of glory transfused Himself into you (2 Cor. 4:4). Some element of Christ penetrated your being, and you were attracted to Him. You reacted to Him, and your spontaneous reaction was your believing, your faith. The Christ who transfused Himself into you became your faith. Therefore, faith does not originate with us; it comes from God. Faith is not separate from Christ, for it is actually Christ Himself transfusing Himself into us and producing a reaction within us.

Our believing is an echo. How can there be an echo without a sound? It is impossible. Christ is the sound. When this sound reaches our heart and spirit it causes a reaction, an echo. This reaction is our appreciation of and faith in the Lord Jesus. This faith is actually Christ Himself within us responding to the gospel. Therefore, this faith is reckoned to us by God as righteousness. When Christ transfused Himself into you, there was a reaction within you—believing. After you believed in the Lord, God reacted to you, reckoning your faith, which is Christ, as righteousness. When God does this to us, we have an appreciative and loving reaction toward Him. This reaction is our faith, a faith that does not originate with us, but which is the essence of the

living Christ within us. This faith returns to God, causing a reaction in God toward us; the righteousness of God is reckoned as ours, and we have something that we never had before. This is our experience of God in justification.

Thus, we have the righteousness of God, which is Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. Abraham, our believing father, received the righteousness of God and Isaac. Likewise, we have received both the righteousness of God and Christ, the present Isaac. This is an experience of God calling things not being as being. When we came to God on the day we were saved, we had nothing. Nevertheless, God appeared to us and called things not being as being. Formerly, we did not have the righteousness of God; after a few minutes we had it. Before that time, we did not have Christ; after a few minutes we had Him. The righteousness of God and Christ are ours—these came as God's reaction to our faith. Now we must return this reaction to God by offering it to Him. After we react in this way, God will react again. God's first reaction was to call things not being as being. His second reaction is to give life to the dead. This is profound.

According to [Romans 4](#), the ultimate issue of this series of reactions is the resurrected Christ.

This resurrected Christ is now in the heavens as a strong proof that God has been satisfied and that we have been justified. The resurrected Christ is in the third heavens at the right hand of God as conclusive evidence that all of God's requirements have been satisfied and that we have been thoroughly and adequately justified. However, this resurrected Christ is not only in the heavens, but also within us to impart life that we may have a life of justification. Therefore, justification is not merely a positional matter; it becomes a dispositional matter. The death of Christ gave us a positional justification, and the resurrected Christ in the heavens is a proof of this. Now the resurrected Christ also lives inside us, reacting within us and living out a life of dispositional justification. Eventually, we are justified both in position and in disposition. We not only have an objective justification, but a subjective justification as well. We may now live such a subjective, dispositional justification.

This justification is the real, living circumcision. What is circumcision? In God's eyes, circumcision means to cut yourself off, to terminate yourself, and to allow God to germinate Himself within you to be your life that you may have a

new beginning. This circumcision is the outward seal of the real, inward justification.

Abraham experienced God as the One who calls things not being as being. By the birth of Isaac, Abraham experienced God in this way. Furthermore, by the resurrection of Isaac, Abraham experienced God as the One who gives life to the dead. There are two kinds of Isaacs: the first is Isaac born; the second is Isaac resurrected. The God in whom Abraham believed had these two aspects. He believed in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead ([Rom. 4:17](#)).

GOD'S PURPOSE IN JUSTIFICATION

The common understanding of justification among most Christians is this: we are sinful; God is righteous and holy; and there is no way for us to contact Him or for Him to contact us. Thus Christ died on the cross and accomplished redemption by shedding His blood. Under His blood we are redeemed, and God has a righteous position to justify us. All of this is absolutely correct. However, the Apostle Paul did not conclude the section on justification at this point, which is reached at the end of [Romans 3](#). His

concern was deeper than redemption—he cared about God's purpose. Redemption is not God's purpose; it is a process to reach God's purpose. In [Romans 3](#) we see redemption bringing forth God's justification, but we do not see God's purpose. What was God's purpose in justification? In answering this question, Paul used Abraham's history as an example, as a picture, to explain what no human words can explain.

Some may think that justification is merely a matter related to sins. However, when we read [Genesis 15](#) where Abraham's faith was reckoned by God as righteousness, we find no mention of sin. Sin was not involved. The concern was over a seed which would become a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. God's justification is not primarily for man's salvation; it is for the fulfillment of His purpose. Why has God chosen you? He did not choose you primarily for salvation; He chose you for His purpose. Why has God called you? He has not called you for heaven. He has called you for the fulfillment of His purpose. Salvation is not an end in itself; it is for God's purpose.

God told Abraham, “Look at the heavens and count the stars. Your seed will be like the stars in the sky.” Abraham believed, and his faith was

counted by God as righteousness. God's justification of Abraham was unrelated to sin. It was totally involved with God's purpose, with having a seed to produce a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This is why the Apostle Paul in [Romans 4](#), after referring to [Genesis 15](#) where Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness, mentions the promise given to Abraham and his seed of inheriting the world ([4:13](#)). Justification enables Abraham and all his believing heirs to inherit the world and to exercise the dominion of God on this earth as mentioned in [Genesis 1](#). If we had only [Romans 3](#), we would say that God's justification, based upon Christ's redemption, is for our salvation. [Chapter four](#), however, clearly unveils that God's justification of His chosen ones is not merely for their salvation; it is purposely for them to inherit the world that they may exercise God's dominion on the earth.

THE ISSUE OF THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

According to [Genesis 15:6](#), Abraham believed God's word about his seed being as the stars of heaven, and God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness. Although Abraham received God's righteousness at that time, he did

not realize very much about it. That righteousness was abstract, not solid or concrete. It might have been little more than a term to Abraham.

In [Genesis 16](#) we find the birth of Ishmael. Although God had reckoned righteousness to Abraham, Abraham had nothing concrete. Thus, Sarah proposed that he have a child by Hagar, and Abraham used his own strength to produce Ishmael. Positionally speaking, Abraham had the righteousness of God; dispositionally speaking, he did not have it. He only had an Ishmael. Circumcision came in simply because Abraham acted on his own to fulfill God's righteousness. [Galatians 4](#) tells us that Hagar typifies the law. Producing an Ishmael by Hagar means to have the works of the law, works that are not the righteousness of God. Abraham had to learn to terminate himself, to cease from his own energy, and to be circumcised.

In [Genesis 17](#) God speaks about Isaac, promising to make His covenant with him. In typology, Isaac typifies Christ as the righteousness of God reckoned to the believing ones by faith. In [Genesis 15](#) Abraham had the righteousness of God positionally. When Isaac was born, he had the righteousness of God dispositionally. He had a real experience of God's righteousness.

The understanding of many Christians is quite superficial. They say, “We are sinful. Christ died for us. If we believe in Him, under His blood God will give us His righteousness and justify us.” According to this concept, righteousness is merely positional and objective. However, from our experiences we can realize that the very righteousness that was reckoned to us at the time we believed was Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. Since Isaac typifies Christ, we may say that Isaac was our righteousness. Eventually, the righteousness of God is not an abstract term, but a Person, the resurrected Christ. This resurrected Christ becomes our present Isaac. Although we received the righteousness of God on the day we believed, we did not realize that this righteousness was actually Christ, the Son of God.

Immediately after receiving Christ, we determined to do good deeds for God. This means that we married Hagar and produced an Ishmael. Remember that Ishmael typifies the work of the law. Although we did a good work, God would say, “Cast Ishmael out. I don’t want that. You must be dealt with and put on the cross. You must be terminated. You must be cut. You must be circumcised. You need My Son as the living

righteousness of God to be born in you and to come forth out of you.” In this way, we have a genuine experience of the righteousness of God and are justified dispositionally as well as positionally.

GOD’S APPEARING TO ABRAHAM

God appeared to Abraham again and again. After Abraham had spent time in God’s presence, He could not help believing in Him, because he had been transfused with God. Thus, Abraham was attracted to God and reacted to Him in believing. His reaction was his believing.

Abraham’s faith did not come from his natural ability, and it did not originate with himself. His believing in God was a reaction to the heavenly radium, a response to the divine infusion. Figuratively speaking, Abraham’s believing was simply God working like radium within him. What is the proper faith? Genuine faith is the working of God within us. This is why God counted Abraham’s faith as righteousness.

ABRAHAM’S FURTHER EXPERIENCE

Abraham received God’s element by a process of divine infusion. Although righteousness had been reckoned to Abraham, he had not yet

experienced that righteousness in a solid, concrete way. Likewise, we may have Christ as our righteousness without actually experiencing Him in a substantial way. At the moment we called on Him, we received Christ, and Christ was made our righteousness. However, Christ must still become our experience. Thus, we need a Sarah.

Sarah typifies grace. Hagar, Abraham's concubine, typifies the law ([Gal. 4:22-26](#)). We have Christ within us, but we lack the experience of this Christ. Who can help us with the experience? Sarah. Do not work with the law by going to Hagar, but cooperate with grace by going to Sarah. If you join yourself to Sarah, you will experience Christ as your righteousness. Do not go to the law, and do not make up your mind to do good. We need to recall Paul's own experience as recounted in [Romans 7:18](#): "To will is present with me, but to do is not." If you will to do good, it means that you are turning to the law. If you determine to honor your parents, love your wife, or submit to your husband, you are turning to the law and marrying Hagar. The result of this union is always an Ishmael. However, if you join yourself to grace, this union will bring forth Christ, the real Isaac.

Isaac signifies the solid experience of the

righteousness which God had reckoned to Abraham. On the day you believed in the Lord Jesus, Christ was given to you and infused into you. You responded in faith, and your faith was reckoned by God as your righteousness. In this way, God made Christ your justification, your righteousness. However, at that moment you did not have the actual experience. After you were saved, you went to Hagar, to the law, making up your mind to do good. To a certain extent you were successful, but the result was Ishmael. Now you must join yourself to God's grace, to Sarah. With Sarah you will have a genuine experience of the Christ you have already received.

THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE

We may apply all this to our experience. In the gospel preaching, through the appearing and transfusion of Christ, we reacted to God in believing with Christ as faith. Then God reckoned this faith back to us as our righteousness, which was a real experience of Christ at the time of our salvation. That was a return of Christ, a further coming of Christ to us after we reacted to God in believing with Him as our faith. As a result of Christ's appearing and His divine transfusion, He became our faith, reacting to God. This faith was

reckoned back to us by God as righteousness, and Christ further became the righteousness of God to us. By a further coming of Christ through God's grace, we had Christ as our righteousness before God. We may summarize the process this way: in His appearing and transfusion Christ became our faith to God, and in return Christ became God's righteousness to us. Then Christ became our experience.

Furthermore, we not only have Christ as the righteousness of God reckoned to us, but we also have the experience of Christ as our Isaac. We treasure this experience, holding it as dear and precious and cherishing it as our only begotten.

THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE FOR GOD'S SATISFACTION

Then God may appear again and ask, "Are you willing to go on with Me? Do you want to enjoy My further appearing? If you do, you must give up Isaac. Give up what I have given to you. Do not cast Isaac away, but offer him up to Me. Bring the very Christ whom you have experienced, lay Him on My altar, and offer Him to Me that I may be satisfied. Your experience of Christ has become your portion and it satisfies

you. Now I ask you to offer this portion to Me that I may be completely satisfied.” Will you do this? Out of a hundred Christians who have had this kind of experience, not one will do it. Everyone will reply, “How can I give up my dear and precious experience of Christ? It is wrong to ask me to give this up.” However, everyone who has been asked to offer up to God his experience of Christ as Isaac and was unwilling to do it was deadened in his spiritual life.

Abraham offered up Isaac for the satisfaction of God. That was a genuine burnt offering. On Mount Moriah God received His complete satisfaction. In [Genesis 22](#) we see that God is not only the God who calls things not being as being—He was revealed as this God in [Genesis 15](#) and [17](#)—but also the God who gives life to the dead. In the eyes of God, Isaac died when Abraham laid him on the altar and raised the knife to slay him. God stopped Abraham, forbidding him to kill Isaac. In typology, this means that God imparted life to the dead Isaac. According to [Hebrews 11:17-19](#), Isaac was resurrected, and Abraham received Isaac back from God in resurrection. This resulted in a further and richer transfusion, infusion, and permeation of God into Abraham.

On Mount Moriah Abraham's spiritual experience reached its peak. As a result, Abraham became so spiritual and so mature in life that in [Genesis 24](#) he typifies God the Father. Where did he become so mature? On Mount Moriah where he received the full portion of God. God the Father was transfused into him. Therefore, Abraham became the father, not only of an individual Isaac, but of the corporate thousands of descendants who are the kingdom of God on this earth for the accomplishment of God's purpose.

Now we can see why Paul, after writing [Romans 3](#), used Abraham's history in [chapter four](#) as a portrait to show the climax of God's justification. The purpose of God's justification is to have a reproduction of Christ in millions of saints. These saints, as the reproduction of Christ, become the members of His Body ([Rom. 12:5](#)). This Body then becomes the kingdom of God on earth ([Rom. 14:17](#)) for the fulfillment of God's purpose. The Body as the kingdom of God is expounded in [Romans 12—16](#). All the local churches are expressions of the Body of Christ as the kingdom of God. The church as the kingdom of God is not composed of one Isaac, but of many Isaacs who have proceeded out of God's justification.

This is the deeper meaning of justification shown by the example of Abraham. Abraham's history affords a complete pattern of the complete and subjective justification of God. We must confess that the source of it all is God's transfusion, infusion, and saturation. This process of transfusion and infusion causes many reactions between God and man. This traffic, this interchange, between us and God, makes us one with Him and brings into being a universal man for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. In this process divinity is mingled with humanity. This is the consummation of God's justification.

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