

SET FREE!

Volume 1, Issue 6



Don't Spend Your Life In The Bath Tub!

GOD is treating you and me as though we are in right standing with Him. Not based on our actions, but based on what Jesus has already done for us at Calvary to make us righteous.

Unfortunately many believers don't fully grasp that fact. Paul wrote about how many in Israel, during his lifetime, missed that fact too.

Romans 10:2-3 (Amplified)
"I bear them witness that they have a [certain] zeal and enthusiasm for God, but it is not enlightened and according to [correct and vital] knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness that God ascribes (which makes one acceptable to Him in word, thought and deed), and seeking to establish a righteousness (a means of salvation) of their own, they did not obey or submit themselves to God's righteousness."

There is a movement within the present day church, in which I see people are being deceived. I believe it's due to the very fact that they are confusing righteousness by the works of the Law with the righteousness or justification that is ours by faith.

To a great extent this is due to ignorance. Much teaching is based on the Old Testament. In the minds of many, there is not a clear definition between the Old and the New covenants. They will read about how God dealt with the Nation of Israel in the Old Covenant and not recognize that He is not dealing with the Church or even us individually today, in that same manner that he did then.

In the Old Covenant, God would say things to Israel, like:

Deuteronomy 28:15 (KJV)
But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

This becomes understood as, "Smarten up and obey the Law or I will bring judgment on you. And if you do smarten up, obey the Law and do better, I will bless you."

So within this element of the church, the teaching is, "if we'll all do better, pray more, fast more - if we'll all search our hearts more to purge out all of the sin in our lives. If we'll look real hard to find even the last bit of sin, then God will be able to move in the church and in

the land, and He'll start to pour out His power and blessings upon us."

This self-purging, this trying to be more righteous, goes on and on - in a futile effort to be good enough and clean enough and righteous enough for God to move amongst us.

It's almost cruel. It's like the carrot on the stick. You know that if you hang that carrot out there, the horse will run faster and faster hoping he'll eventually catch up to that carrot. But he never will.

Some times I think the church spends too much time in the bathtub.

Many think that if they get clean enough, then revival will break out in the land or at least in the local church.

If that is what they are trying to accomplish, then they are on a hopeless quest.

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In fact it is **the deception of self-righteousness**. Doing good and not doing wrong is simply keeping the Law. But we cannot be justified or made more righteous by keeping the rules and trying to clean ourselves more and more.

Yes there is passion there and they have good intentions, just like it said of Israel in those verses in **Romans 10:2-3**. You can, however, be passionate and still be heading in the wrong direction.

We need to use our faith, not our works. Constantly seeking after forgiveness or justification, is a work - a dead work - a religious work. Because if after having worked at getting clean until you figure you are clean, then you have done it on your own.

When it came to being righteous Paul discounted all personal achievement or effort. He wanted only to –

Philippians 3:9 (KJV)

Be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

**“And be found *in Him*”
Not *in the bathtub!*”**

Philippians 3:10 (Philips) *“For now **my place is in him**, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-righteousness achieved of the Law. God has given me that genuine righteousness which comes from faith in Christ.”*

My right standing, says Paul, doesn't come from keeping all the rules or from being religious or from hours of scrubbing in the tub, it comes by having faith in what Christ has done for me.

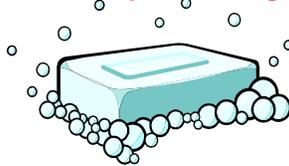
2 Corinthians 5:17 & 21 (KJV)
17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

During the middle Ages, the Church of Rome told people that they had to please God through confession, penance and works. The Reformers came along and said, what the Word teaches, that the **“just shall live by faith”**.

We walk and live the Christian life, in right standing with God by faith, not by having 24 hour, seven day a week prayer meetings or marching around the city or burning our TV sets. That's that carrot on the stick that will never be caught. We need to not keep hopelessly trying to catch it.

We are forensically righteous. We've been made clean!

Don't keep scrubbing!



Being righteousness is demonstrated in the Christian life style.

The Christian life is to live like the person God has made you. Talking like, acting like, working like, doing things like a righteous saint would. That's a life of sanctification and holiness. This is what we press toward.

It is the walk of excellence.

In doing so we walk and act in love not in fear of retribution from God. God is not judging you or the world. He isn't withholding blessings from you or the church based on our behavior.

You need to accept that fact - accept it by faith rather than trying to get yourself or the church clean enough or good enough for God to pour Himself out of and through.

The Church is the Body of Christ and the Body isn't dirty.

Jesus gave Himself in order to clean it up –

Ephesians 5:25-26 (CEV)

²⁵A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. ²⁶He made the church holy by the power of his word, and he made it pure by washing it with water. ²⁷Christ did this, so that he would have a glorious and holy church, without faults or spots or wrinkles or any other flaws.

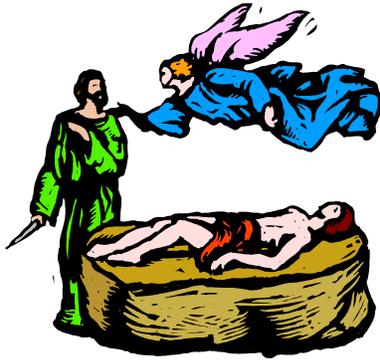
Our efforts won't make it cleaner than what He has already made it.

Jesus doesn't need you and me to give Him a bath because He is in right standing with the Father – He is totally clean. We are “in Christ Jesus”; therefore we don't need to constantly bathe either, because we are His body, His church, the Body that He has **already washed clean**.

Realize that God has cleaned you up, and that waiting until you *feel* righteous or clean is a futile effort. All that it will do is keep you from doing the works of righteousness.

The works of righteousness include loving and serving one another and loving and serving the lost. That's living like the clean Body we are.

Don't spend your life in the bathtub. Instead be out there living like the righteous person you have been made.



ABRAHAM

From Fear To Faith

When we study about the great heroes of the faith in our Bibles, sometimes we get the idea that they were some kind of super humans and that they never got it wrong along the way.

Because of that we might find it hard to relate to them. We hear people say, "Oh, but that was Paul or that was Daniel". They don't see these people as people just like us.

In **James 5:17** it says: *Elijah was just as human as we are, and for three and a half years his prayers kept the rain from falling.*

He hurt, he got scared, he was happy, he was depressed, and he was a man who had emotions like everyone else. Yet we generally think of him as this great prophet who called down fire from heaven.

Today we'll look at another great man of the Word, Abraham. We'll watch as he went from a man of fear and even disobedience, to the man we call the father of our faith.

Genesis 12:1-3 *1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Abraham was told to leave his home in Ur. He was to leave the certainties of the past, to face the uncertainties of the future and to look for and follow the direction of God's will.

Here is where Abram disobeys right off the start. He was told to leave Ur and to leave his family behind.

Acts 7:2-4 *2 Stephen answered: Friends, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he had moved to Haran. 3 God told him, "Leave your country and your relatives and go to a land that I will show you." 4 Then Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, Abraham came and settled in this land where you now live.*

Did God tell him to take his father and go to Haran? NO!

He was told to leave his family behind, but instead he went up the road about 60 miles and stayed there until his father died.

By then Abraham was 75 years old. We don't know how much time he lost in Haran, but the point was that he didn't go where and when he was told to go.

To top that off he took his father who lived to be 205 years of age.

Okay, so now he's got it right, he's on his way to Bethel.

Is that right? No.

Genesis 12:5 *Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.*

Who's along for the ride that is not entitled to be there? His nephew Lot.

Lot later turns out to be a lot of trouble, and a real liability.

* * *

Now everything, except for Lot is on target. Abram is settling down in Canaan where God told him to go.

But does he stay there where God said He would bless him?

Genesis 12:10 *The crops failed, and there was no food anywhere in the land. So Abram and his wife Sarai went to live in Egypt for a while.*

Hello, Abram, who told you to go to Egypt? Not God!

Perhaps Abram didn't figure God could look after him during a famine, so he took matters into his own hands. Bad plan!

Let's see what trouble that caused him. Here we find him talking to his wife.

Genesis 12:12-13 *12 When the Egyptians see how lovely you are, they will murder me because I am your husband. But they won't kill you. 13 Please save my life by saying that you are my sister."*

We find him bending the truth here. It was true that she was his half sister, but not his sister

- sister. They had the same father but different mothers.

When the Egyptian Pharaoh saw Sarai, he wanted her for his harem. So he pays Abram for her. Oooops!

Genesis 12:15-16 15 She was taken to his house. 16 The king was good to Abram because of Sarai, and Abram was given sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.

Well we know that that plan didn't go well and when the Pharaoh finds out that Abram lied to him he kicked them out of town.

* * *

Next we learn that Abram and Lot split up. Now Abram can go on about his business, but then a bunch of kings get into a fight and Lot and his family wind up getting captured.

So Abram has to get his men and go and rescue Lot and his family. If he had left Lot back in Ur in the first place he wouldn't have to do all of that.

* * *

By chapter 15 Abram is getting a bit antsy about having his promised son and he asked God, "Is Eliezer, my servant, suppose to be the heir of all of this"?

God responds to his question:

Genesis 15:4 "No, he won't! You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his."

* * *

God is now going to give Abram the most dramatic experience of his entire life, he is going to cut covenant for him.

Genesis 15:9-18 9 Then the Lord told him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove, and a young pigeon." 10 Abram obeyed the Lord. Then he cut the animals in half and laid the two halves of each animal opposite each other on the ground. But he did not cut the doves and pigeons in half. 11 And when birds came down to eat the animals, Abram chased them away. 12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and everything became dark and frightening. 13 Then the Lord said: Abram, you will live to an old age and die in peace. But I solemnly promise that your descendants will live as foreigners in a land that doesn't belong to them. They will be forced into slavery and abused for four hundred years. But I will terribly punish the nation that enslaves them, and they will leave with many possessions. 16 Four generations later, your descendants will return here and take this land, because only then will the people who live here be so sinful that they deserve to be punished. 17 Sometime after sunset, when it was very dark, a smoking cooking pot and a flaming fire went between the two halves of each animal. 18 At that time the Lord made an agreement with Abram and told him: I will give your descendants the land east of the Shihor River on the border of Egypt as far as the Euphrates River.

God has now cut covenant on behalf of Abram.

That has got to seal it, right? No, not yet.

Abram is still getting uptight about having a son, and rather than wait for his wife to bear the son, he sleeps with her maid Hagar and they have a son named Ishmael.

At the time it was Sarah's idea, but later she didn't like the idea and has the maid and the boy thrown out of the house.

In this case, as in all of the others, Abram had been acting in fear rather than in faith.

Meanwhile God keeps reminding him that He will do what He promised him.

Look at it again here in:
Genesis 17:1-8 Abram was ninety-nine years old when the Lord appeared to him again and said, "I am God All-Powerful. If you obey me and always do right, 2 I will keep my solemn promise to you and give you more descendants than can be counted." 3 Abram bowed with his face to the ground, and God said: 4 I promise that you will be the father of many nations. That's why I now change your name from Abram to Abraham. 6 I will give you a lot of descendants, and in the future they will become great nations. Some of them will even be kings. 7 I will always keep the promise I have made to you and your descendants, because I am your God and their God. 8 I will give you and them the land in which you are now a foreigner. I will give the whole land of Canaan to your family forever, and I will be their God.

* * *

Chapter 20 and we find Abraham on the road again. He's heading back near Egypt to a town called Gerar.

We would figure by now that he learned his lesson about fearing for his life when some king got a look at Sarah, who by now is 90 years old.

But

Genesis 20:1-2 *Abraham moved to the Southern Desert, where he settled between Kadesh and Shur. Later he went to Gerar, and while there 2 he told everyone that his wife Sarah was his sister. So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.*

Here we go again, the great man of faith Abraham, is still in fear.

Well they go through a big mess again with the local king. Abraham, despite his failure actually comes out on top in this.

* * *

Abraham finally gets his promised heir. Along comes the son, Isaac, in chapter 21.

Some years later God decided to test Abraham, so he spoke to him.

Genesis 22:1-2 *1 Abraham answered, "Here I am, Lord." 2 The Lord said, "Go get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to the land of Moriah, and I will show you a mountain where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an altar."*

Abraham has nearly blown it in every situation up until now. Sure he got a number of things right. And he did prosper and take the land. But now this!

Here, however, we see Abraham come on like faith man.

He takes Isaac up to the mountain and prepares to sacrifice him. By now he believes God's Word so much, that there isn't the slightest hint of unbelief or fear.

Abraham believed God's promise to make a race of people from his son Isaac, so much, that he knew that even if he killed Isaac that God would raise him back from the dead to do it.

Hebrews 11:17-19 *17 Abraham had been promised that Isaac, his only son, would continue his family. But when Abraham was tested, he had faith and was willing to sacrifice Isaac, 19 because he was sure that God could raise people to life. This was just like getting Isaac back from death.*

No wonder Abraham wasn't dragging his feet when he took Isaac up to be sacrificed, he was actually looking forward to seeing God raise up the boy, back to life, from the ashes.

We see Abraham go from fear to faith. But it seemed like a whole lot more fear going on in the early days than it did faith.

How did God see Abraham in all of this? Did He see and treat him as a royal screw up or did he see him as a man of faith?

Romans 4:17-22 *17 The Scriptures say that Abraham would become the ancestor of many nations. This promise was made to Abraham because he had faith in God, who raises the dead to life and creates new things. 18 God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed*

hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations. 19 Abraham's faith never became weak, not even when he was nearly a hundred years old. He knew that he was almost dead and that his wife Sarah could not have children. 20 But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God. 21 Abraham was certain that God could do what he had promised. 22 So God accepted him.

Even though Abraham continued to act in fear and grow weak, God treated him as if he was righteous, or in right standing with Him. Paul even put that in writing in that letter to the Romans.

We've just spent some time looking at all of the times Abraham messed up, lied and acted in fear, and yet God kept saying he was righteous.

How could God do that?

It was because God saw Abraham as righteous, as perfect.

It all started because Abraham had faith in God in the first place. When God told him to leave his home and to travel to Canaan, he did it.

From that day on God treated Abraham like he was righteous, even when he wasn't acting like it.

Let's look at the verse just before Romans 4:17.

Romans 4:16 *Everything depends on having faith in God, so that God's promise is assured by his great kindness. This promise isn't only for Abraham's descendants who have the Law. It is for all who are Abraham's descendants because they have faith, just as he did....*

Let's go on down to:

Romans 4:23-25 23 *But these words were not written only for Abraham. 24 They were written for us, since we will also be accepted **because of our faith in God**, who raised our Lord Jesus to life. 25 God gave Jesus to die for our sins, and he raised him to life, **so that we would be made acceptable to God.***

God has always treated you as being righteous. Even before you accepted His gift of salvation.

It has nothing to do with how good you acted before you were born again or how badly you may mess up after that. God has always been treating you as if you were righteous.

God's grace treats you like he treated Abraham.

Now that you have accepted the gift of salvation you are a joint heir of Jesus.

You are hidden in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:3 (KJV) *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Judgment and wrath can't find you. You are hidden in Christ and He is hidden in the Father.

By the way, the devil can't find you there either. So don't go fussing about him getting to you. He can't do it. You are surrounded with Christ, with His "burden removing, yoke destroying" Anointing.

The next time the devil starts throwing garbage at you and telling you that you are a real mess up, and that God is not happy with you, you just remember, you are accepted by grace through your **faith** in the finished work of Calvary.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV) 8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

The **New Century Bible** says it this way:

Ephesians 2:8-9 8 *You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. 9 It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.*

You couldn't earn salvation by your good behavior and you won't keep it or lose it based on your good deeds or your failures.

Grace has saved you, and it's strong enough to keep you!

If God could treat Abraham like He did, based on simple faith, just think how He can treat you seeing you through the sacrifice of Jesus.

You are one in Jesus. You have an unbreakable covenant that was made between Father God and Jesus the Son.

Because it's between them, you and I can't mess it up!

I'm not teaching you all of this to say it's okay to mess up, to sin deliberately. No, the idea of grace is so that you can live in a love relationship based on faith, not performance.

"the just shall live by faith"

You don't want to mess up and sin because you are in love with God.

You don't intentionally sin so that grace will have something to do. **We don't want to sin because we are in love with our Lord.**

Abraham walked much of the time in fear and that caused him to sin. For us to not walk in fear we simply walk in faith and in love.

(We talked about this, two issues back, in the article called *Living Carefree.*)

1 John 4:18 *A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love.*

Our task then is to perfect our love for God. We do that by spending time with Him and in His Word, which in turn will cause our faith to come forward and produce. (Romans 10:17)

With faith producing and love growing we will not walk in fear, but in faith.

{Scripture verses in this article, except where noted, are from The Message translation}

"Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you."
Galatians 5:1 MSG

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Is a complimentary ministry, prepared for you, by:
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1 Peter 2:16 (MSG)
Exercise your freedom by serving God, not by breaking the rules.