

Alignment (Week 4)

Small Group Lesson

Abraham “justified by faith” (Romans 4:1)

Back in the early 90's there was a dramatic play performed at Bethany called “Heaven’s Gates and Hell’s Flames”. Thousands were won to Christ through this intense drama about life-ending situations that thrust the actors before the judgement seat of Christ.

In one scene there was a father and son who were returning from a baseball game. In conversation the son says that since he has been going to church with his mom he has been thinking about making Jesus his Lord. He asks his Dad why he doesn't go to church. The father responds by saying, “Well son, your mom is always reading her bible and praying, she goes to church every time the doors are open. I think your mom has enough religion for the whole family” and the son replies “Yeah Dad, I guess you're right”. In the next moment the father and son are involved in a fatal car accident. Neither the father or son have a relationship with Jesus so they are dragged off to hell. The actor playing Satan looks at the grieving father and says “Thanks for the help Dad, we almost lost the boy!” Intense right? The cold hard truth is that we are not made right with God because of our associations.

Abraham was the Father of the whole Jewish nation. Every real Jew could trace his family line back to Abraham and because Jews referred to themselves the sons of Abraham, they believed that association was enough to make them righteous. The apostle Paul uses the faith of Abraham to make some crucial points about being righteous.

Righteousness comes by “credit” (v. 3, NIV)

The scriptures say that “Abraham believed God and it was credited (imputed, reckoned, counted) to him as righteousness.” This word “credited” is a math and accounting term. When a deposit is placed in your bank account it is at your disposal. When we believe (put our total trust in) Jesus Christ, then we open the gate for God's righteousness to be deposited in our spiritual account. Now when God looks at us He sees His own righteousness over our life, not all of our past wrongs. Awesome, right!

Alignment Question: What a loving and kind God we have! What does it mean to you to know that He doesn't make you work for your righteousness but gives it to you freely when you place your trust in Him alone?

Righteousness is a gift (v. 4)

This deposit of righteousness that God adds or “credits” to us is a gift from Him. It is not something that we need to work for. Now if we could work for righteousness (by good works and keeping the Law) we would have a wage and not a gift (v. 4) and could claim full credit for what we have earned. Many other religions teach that you have to earn your way to heaven. If that were possible, the question would be; “Why did Jesus have to die for me if I could do it myself?” Of course we understand that the sin debt that we have is impossible for us to reconcile. Thank God for His wonderful gift!

Alignment Question: Have you ever received a gift that was unexpected? What was it? What does the experience say about the person giving the gift? Explain.

Righteousness comes by “promise” (v. 10-13)

God made a “promise” to Abraham when he was 75 years old (Gen. 15: 5). A promise of descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky! Faith that what God said He would do, made him right before God. The Jewish faith taught that circumcision made a person righteous (it symbolized the cutting away of the flesh). Abraham was not “circumcised” (the sign of keeping the Law) until age 95! This was 20 years later!

God’s promise to Abraham was that his “Seed” (Christ) would bless all nations (Gen. 22: 18). All we have to do is believe in that “seed” (Jesus) in order to be “sons of Abraham” and be delivered from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3: 13-29). What this says if God made a promise to Abraham and his seed then you are in line for the blessing if you receive Jesus!

Alignment Question: Ever had a promise broken? We all have. Take a moment and share with the group a promise from God that you are trusting in. If you don’t have a particular verse then share a need with the group and together find a promise that you can stand on.

Righteousness comes by “faith” (v.16-22)

Faith speaks like it has already been accomplished. Abraham believed God and entered the “fourth dimension” (a realm beyond the natural laws). Faith comes from “seeing, seizing, substance, and saying.” People will call you crazy if you call those things that do not exist as though they did. The Holy Spirit shows you things that come up in your spirit and you begin to call those things as though they are. Have you ever seen a lady who says that she is pregnant but you can’t tell yet? For 24 years, Abraham was “pregnant with a vision” before his wife was “pregnant with a baby.” He never wavered that he would have children like the stars and it was “counted to him as righteousness (v. 22). You don’t need to work and sweat to try to make yourself righteous. Just believe God and receive it by faith.

Alignment Question: We all need like minded friends who have a strong faith in God’s promises to believe with us for breakthroughs. Do you have another “faith-full” brother in Christ who will stand with you to see “those things that are not” become a reality? If not ask God to bring that individual into your life, it may be

your B-Group leader or even another member of the group, or your wife if you are married. There is power in the prayer of agreement with God's word and another believer!

Leader: Take a few minutes and ask if any men are having trouble believing that they are righteous. Minister to them as needed also lead your group in prayer for the names of men that your group is agreeing for their salvation. Look for opportunities to serve in outreach at your campus.