SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 4

Faith Credited as Righteousness — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God has always declared sinners righteous the same way: He credits righteousness to the one who believes Him, apart from works, rites or Law — Abraham before circumcision, David after his sin, and me. Abraham's faith looked at a dead body and a living promise and trusted the God who raises the dead, and that same God raised Jesus for my justification.

00 The Text

ROMANS 4 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

22 Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

23 Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him,

24 but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Marked in the text

- **v3** "credited" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** "credits" — Key repeated word
- **v8** "TAKE INTO ACCOUNT" — Key repeated word
- **v2** "he has something to boast about" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "as what is due" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "Him who justifies the ungodly" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN" — Promise / blessing
- **v7** "SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED" — Promise / blessing
- **v10** "Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised" — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** "a seal of the righteousness of the faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v11** "the father of all who believe" — Promise / blessing
- **v12** "follow in the steps of the faith" — Command / instruction
- **v13** "not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith" — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** "the Law brings about wrath" — Sin / warning
- **v16** "in accordance with grace" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "the promise will be guaranteed" — Promise / blessing
- **v17** "who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "In hope against hope he believed" — Time / place / contrast
- **v19** "as good as dead" — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** "did not waver in unbelief" — Sin / warning
- **v20** "grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" — Command / instruction
- **v21** "He was able also to perform" — God — His character & actions
- **v24** "but for our sake also" — Promise / blessing
- **v24** "Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" — God — His character & actions
- **v25** "delivered over because of our transgressions" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "raised because of our justification" — Promise / blessing

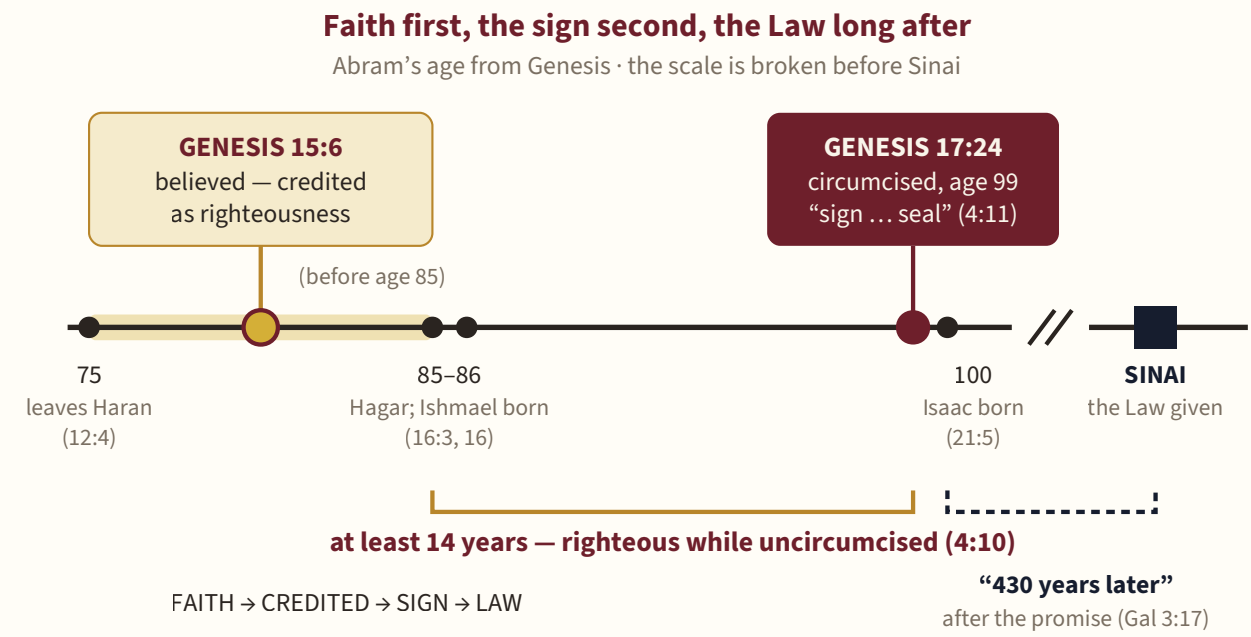
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 4:3

"For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.""

FIGURE · ABRAHAM'S CALENDAR



See the order Paul argues from: Abraham was counted righteous in Genesis 15, circumcised at least fourteen years later, and the Law came 430 years after the promise.

Setting. Romans 3 has just said that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (3:28), and that this establishes the Law rather than nullifying it (3:31). Chapter 4 is Paul's proof from the Law itself — Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32. Two witnesses (Deut 19:15): Abraham, "our forefather according to the flesh" (v1), and David, Israel's king.

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **credited, not earned:** If Abraham was justified by works he could boast — "but not before God" (v2). Scripture says "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (v3, Gen 15:6). A worker's wage is "what is due"; the one who "does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly" has his faith credited as righteousness (vv4–5). David says the same in Psalm 32: lawless deeds forgiven, sins covered, sin the Lord will not take into account (vv6–8).
- vv9–12 — **before the knife:** Is this blessing only for the circumcised? When was it credited — "Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised" (v10). Circumcision was "the sign … a seal of the righteousness of the

faith which he had while uncircumcised" (v11), so Abraham is father of all who believe, circumcised or not, if they "follow in the steps of the faith" (vv11–12).

- vv13–17 — **the promise by faith:** The promise that he would be "heir of the world" was "not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith" (v13). If Law-keepers are heirs, faith is void and the promise nullified, for "the Law brings about wrath" (vv14–15). So it is by faith, "in accordance with grace," that the promise may be "guaranteed to all the descendants" (v16) — Abraham is "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS" before the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist" (v17).
- vv18–22 — **hope against hope:** He believed "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE" (v18). He contemplated his body, as good as dead at about a hundred, and Sarah's dead womb (v19), yet "did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God" (v20), "fully assured" God "was able also to perform" (v21). "Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (v22).
- vv23–25 — **for our sake also:** It was written not for his sake only, but for ours, "to whom it will be credited" if we believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (vv23–24) — "He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification" (v25).

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- **credited / credits / take into account** — 11 (all *logizomai*): "credited" vv3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24; "credits" v6; "take into account" v8.
- **faith** — 10: vv5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 (×2), 19, 20.
- **circumcised / circumcision / uncircumcised** — 12 in vv9–12 alone (v9 ×2, v10 ×4, v11 ×3, v12 ×3); 5 of them "uncircumcised."
- **righteousness** — 8: vv3, 5, 6, 9, 11 (×2), 13, 22.
- **father / forefather** — 7: vv1, 11, 12 (×2), 16, 17, 18.
- **Abraham** — 7: vv1, 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 16.
- **God** — 7: vv2, 3, 6, 17, 20 (×2), 21.
- **believe(d/s)** — 6: vv3, 5, 11, 17, 18, 24.
- **promise(d)** — 5: vv13, 14, 16, 20, 21. **Law** — 5: vv13, 14, 15 (×2), 16.
- **blessing / blessed** — 4: vv6, 7, 8, 9. **work(s)** — 4: vv2, 4, 5, 6. **dead / deadness** — 4: vv17, 19 (×2), 24.

Contrasts: works ⟷ believing (vv4–5) · "as a favor" ⟷ "as what is due" (v4) · the ungodly ⟷ righteousness (v5) · circumcised ⟷ uncircumcised (vv9–12) · Law ⟷ promise (vv13–16) · wrath ⟷ grace (vv15–16) · hope against hope (v18) · a body as good as dead ⟷ the God who gives life to the dead (vv17, 19) · waver in unbelief ⟷ grow strong in faith (v20) · his sake only ⟷ our sake also (vv23–24) · delivered over ⟷ raised (v25).

Shape of the chapter: a question (v1), a Scripture (v3), and an argument that walks forward through Abraham's life in order — Genesis 15, Genesis 17, the promise, the birth of Isaac — and then steps out of the story and points at me (vv23–25). It opens with Abraham "credited" and closes with Jesus "raised"; the bookkeeping word runs through the middle like a thread.

Chapter theme (my words): Righteousness has always been a gift entered to the account of the ungodly who believe God. Abraham received it before any sign or Law, by trusting the God who raises the dead — and the same credit is mine through faith in Him who raised Jesus.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 4:11

"and he received the sign of circumcision, ☆ a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had ◷ while uncircumcised, so that he might be ☆ the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,"

FIGURE · THE LEDGER OF GRACE

λογίζομαι · logizomai · "to credit, put to one's account" (G3049)

Two ways a payment can be entered in the book (Romans 4:4–5)

WAGES · v. 4		GIFT · v. 5
WHO the one who works		WHO the one who does not work, but believes
ENTERED AS "what is due" · *kata opheilēma*	≠	ENTERED AS "a favor" · *kata charin*
GOD IS the employer who owes		GOD IS "Him who justifies the ungodly"
RESULT "something to boast about" (v. 2)		RESULT faith credited as righteousness

DAVID'S LEDGER · vv. 6–8 (Psalm 32:1–2)

DEBIT column · my sin	CREDIT column · righteousness
"the Lord will not take into account"	"God credits … apart from works"

Read across the two columns: the same verb, "credited," enters either a debt God owes or a gift God gives — and David's ledger shows both columns of the sinner's account changed by grace.

Was Abraham justified by faith or by works? Paul says faith (Gen 15:6); James 2:21 says Abraham was "justified by works when he offered up Isaac." Sproul refuses to make the Bible speak with a "forked tongue": Paul asks how an unjust man is declared righteous before God; James asks whether a faith that produces nothing is real. Genesis 15 is the declaration; Genesis 22, decades later, is the demonstration. *Dikaioō* can mean to declare righteous or to show to be righteous. His summary: justification is by faith alone, "but not by a faith that is alone."

What does "credited" mean? *Logizomai* is ledger language — to put to someone's account. Guzik: "Our justification is not God making us perfectly righteous, but counting us as perfectly righteous" (with Wuest's picture of a deposit

placed in a bank account). Sproul presses this against Trent: Rome said righteousness must be infused into us before God declares us righteous; the Reformers said Christ's righteousness is credited to us from outside, *extra nos*. "It is Christ's righteousness counted for you." Henry: "The gospel way of justification is by an imputed righteousness." Sproul also answers the charge of "legal fiction": "This is not a legal fiction. Rather, it is a legal declaration."

Is my faith itself the righteousness? No. Spurgeon: "Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ" and "Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the obedience of Christ." Sproul: faith is the instrument, never the ground. Abraham's faith looked forward to the promised Seed; mine looks back to the cross and empty tomb (vv24–25).

Whom does God justify? "The ungodly" (v5). Not the improving, not the almost-good. Spurgeon: "Pardon must be for the guilty. Forgiveness must be for the sinful." Guzik: we are justified not because of our ungodliness but despite it — and "God isn't praising laziness here." David proves it: forgiven lawless deeds, covered sins, sin not counted (vv7–8). Henry: "Pardoned people are the only blessed people."

Why does the timing of circumcision matter? Genesis 15 comes before Abram had lived ten years in Canaan (Gen 16:3, age 85); he was circumcised at ninety-nine (Gen 17:24) — at least fourteen years later (Guzik; Henry says fourteen, "some say twenty-five"). So the sign could not be the cause; it was a seal on a righteousness he already had. The Law came "four hundred and thirty years later" (Gal 3:17). Sproul (Presbyterian) and Henry use sign-and-seal to explain baptism, including infant baptism; Spurgeon (Baptist) differed on who receives the sign — but all four agree no rite justifies. Sproul: "The sacrament does not justify anybody."

What does "heir of the world" mean? The land promise widened to the whole earth through the Seed. Henry: "Now Christ is the heir of the world … and it is in him that Abraham was so." Sproul: "the only proper heir of God the Father is God the Son"; we are joint heirs in Him (8:17).

Did Abraham "consider" his body or "not consider" it (v19)? A real textual difference. The text NASB95 follows reads he *contemplated* his body as good as dead — faith faced the facts. The Byzantine text behind the KJV/NKJV reads he "considered not" his body. Guzik (NKJV) prefers "did not consider"; Henry (KJV) reads it the same way. Both end in one place: the facts were real, and they did not get the final vote.

Why "raised because of our justification" (v25)? Same preposition, *dia*, in both lines. Sproul: a moral debt need not be accepted from a substitute; the resurrection is the Father saying, "I accept this payment for those debtors who cannot pay." Henry: "By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance."

Word study (Greek):

- **credited — *logizomai* (G3049):** to reckon, put to one's account; 11× in this chapter.
- **ungodly — *asebēs* (G765):** without reverence for God (v5).
- **what is due — *opheilēma* (G3783):** a debt owed; only here and Matthew 6:12.
- **favor / grace — *charis* (G5485):** a gift freely given (vv4, 16).
- **seal — *sphragis* (G4973):** a signet impression that certifies what already exists (v11).
- **steps — *ichnos* (G2487):** footprints; walk in line in them (*stoicheō*, G4748) (v12).
- **guaranteed — *bebaios* (G949):** firm footing, legally valid (v16).
- **gives life — *zōopoieō* (G2227):** to make alive (v17).
- **contemplated — *katanoeō* (G2657):** to consider attentively (v19).

- **waver — *diakrinō* (G1252):** to be divided in oneself (v20).
- **fully assured — *plērophoreō* (G4135):** carried full, fully convinced (v21).
- **delivered over — *paradidōmi* (G3860):** handed over (v25).
- **justification — *dikaiōsis* (G1347):** acquittal; only 4:25 and 5:18.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **One verb, eleven times.** *Logizomai* — credited, credits, take into account — is the spine of the chapter.
2. **Counted righteous, not made perfect.** Change follows justification; it is not its ground.
3. **God justifies the ungodly — not the improved.** "The sinner is the gospel's reason for existence" (Spurgeon).
4. **Wages and gifts cannot share a column.** If I earned it, God owes me — and no man can make God his debtor (Henry).
5. **Paul and James answer different questions.** Declared righteous (Gen 15) and shown righteous (Gen 22).
6. **The sign came after the substance.** Faith, then circumcision fourteen-plus years later, then the Law 430 years after the promise.
7. **Abraham's children are known by footprints,** not by the marks on their bodies.
8. **Faith looked at the facts and did not flinch.** "Contemplated" or "considered not" — the promise outweighed the body.
9. **Strength came from outside.** "He was strengthened" is passive; God empties us of self before He fills us (Spurgeon).
10. **The empty tomb is the receipt.** Raised because of our justification.

Cross-references: Gen 12:1–4; 15:1–6; 16:3, 16; 17:1–11, 24; 21:1–5; 22:1–18; Deut 19:15; Ps 32:1–5; Isa 53:5, 11–12; Hab 2:4; Rom 3:21–31; 5:1, 18; 8:17, 32; 2 Cor 5:19–21; Gal 3:6–9, 16–18; Eph 2:8–9; Heb 11:8–12, 17–19; James 2:21–24; 1 Pet 2:21.

03 Application

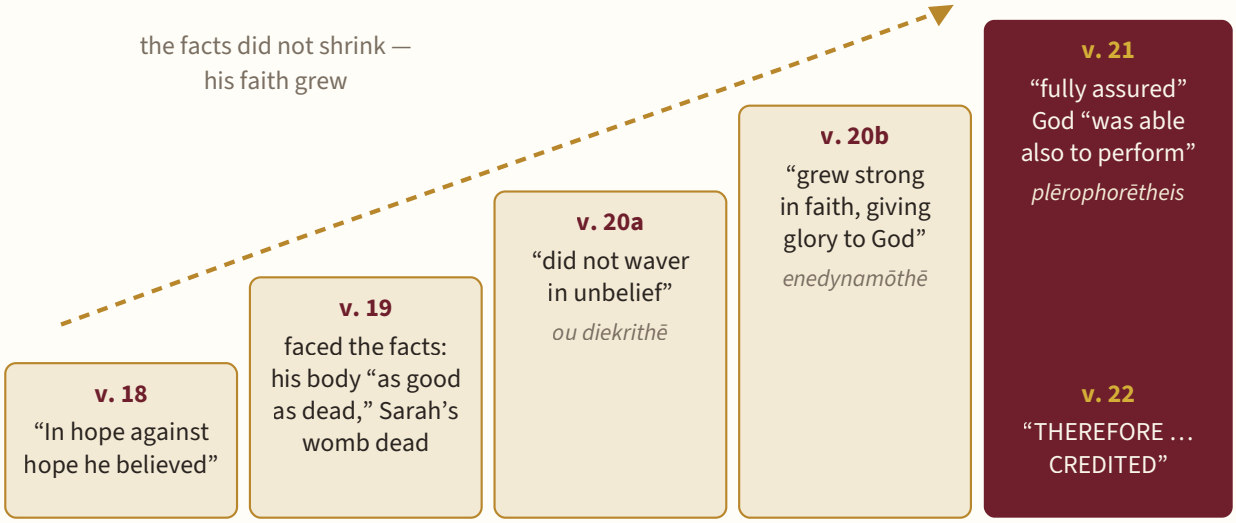
HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 4:20–21

"yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform."

FIGURE · HOPE AGAINST HOPE

The anatomy of Abraham's faith · Romans 4:18–22



Climb the steps of verses 18–21: the obstacles stay the same size while Abraham's faith grows, until God credits it as righteousness.

Promise to trust — "the Lord will not take into account." David's sins were adultery and murder, and God did not enter them in his book (v8). The worst things I have done are not on my account if I am in Christ. The accuser keeps reading me an old ledger; God's ledger says "credited — righteousness," and "not counted — sin." When the shame comes back, I will answer it with verse 8, out loud if I have to.

Sin to confess — keeping score. Verse 4 exposes me. I still live like a wage-earner with God — a good week of prayer and I feel He owes me; a bad week and I feel He's done with me. That is boasting (v2) and it is unbelief. I confess that I keep trying to work my way into a gift. The men I walk with in recovery know this well: "ninety days clean" is a mercy to celebrate, not a balance to stand on before God.

Command to obey — "follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham." Abraham's children are known by their footprints (v12). This week that means taking one step I can only take if God's promise is true — making the phone call, confessing to a brother, giving when it is tight, going back to the man who hurt me.

Example to follow — look at the facts, then look at God. Abraham did not pretend his body was young (v19). He did not waver either (v20). I can be honest about a marriage, a diagnosis, a prodigal child or a prison sentence and still say God "was able also to perform" (v21). Faith is not denial; it is weighing the facts against the God who gives life to the dead.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. If God kept a wage ledger on you, what would you be owed? Why is verse 4 bad news and verse 5 good news? (4:4–5; Eph 2:8–9) *A wage is entered "as what is due"; a gift only "as a favor."*
2. David most likely wrote Psalm 32 after his adultery and murder. What does it tell you that Paul chose him as the second witness? (4:6–8; Ps 32:1–5) *"Pardoned people are the only blessed people."*
3. What "circumcision" are you tempted to trust — baptism, church membership, a clean record, a year sober — as if it made you right with God? (4:9–12; Gal 5:6) *Signs point; only Christ justifies.*
4. Abraham "contemplated his own body, now as good as dead." What fact in your life looks as good as dead, and what promise speaks to it? (4:18–21; Heb 11:11–12) *Faith does not deny the facts; it refuses to let them have the last word.*
5. "He grew strong in faith" — he was strengthened. Where do you need strength you cannot produce, and how does giving God glory feed it? (4:20–21; 2 Cor 12:9) *Trusting Him to perform is itself the glory we give Him.*
6. Why does Paul say Jesus was raised "because of our justification"? What would be missing if the tomb were still sealed? (4:24–25; 1 Cor 15:17) *The cross paid; the resurrection is the Father's receipt.*

Worship. I worship the God "who justifies the ungodly," who "gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." He did it in Sarah's womb, He did it in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, and He did it in me. Spurgeon was right: "To justify the ungodly — this is a miracle worthy of a God."

Prayer. Father, I come with nothing in my hands but the promise You made. Thank You for not counting my sin against me and for crediting to me the righteousness of Jesus. Stop me from keeping score with You. When my circumstances look as good as dead, strengthen my faith from outside myself so that I do not waver, and let my trust give You glory. Help me walk in Abraham's footsteps this week, and help the men I serve to believe that Jesus was delivered over for their transgressions and raised for their justification. In His name, Amen.

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