Romans chap. 4

Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. 9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus

our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Abraham is presented in this chapter as a model or father of all believers who are justified by faith alone. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. This word counted is translated as impute at the end of the chapter but for all intents and purposes it's the same Greek word which means to reckon, impute or count. Belief or faith is contrasted with working to pay off a debt. Grace that is received by faith is wholly unmerited by the sinner and this is where the 'unmerited grace of God' is defined by scripture. Grace goes against everything we have ever been taught by the world. In the world if I want something I have to work hard and earn money to pay for it but not so with grace which is often likened to a gift. A gift is free to the recipient but not so with the giver who bears the expense. The free gift of grace was purchased by the Son of God who shed his holy blood on a Roman cross and rose from the grave for our justification.

Circumcision is next discussed with an emphasis on the time frame in which it was received. Abraham was initially justified by faith in Genesis ch. 15 and it wasn't until Genesis ch. 17 that he received a new name and the sign of circumcision or the cutting of the flesh. The point is emphatically made that Abraham was justified by faith prior to being circumcised. The Jews at this time were commanding circumcision on the Gentiles and Paul refutes their sophistry by showing that Abraham was justified by faith without works. Circumcision is also said to be a 'seal' of righteousness by faith. The time between Abraham's initial justification by faith and his receiving the 'seal' of circumcision was roughly 20 years. During this time Abraham's faith faltered with him fathering Ishmael thru Hagar and his unbelief in the promise of God to give him a son thru Sarah. Abraham is a model of all believers and his faith was tested with trials and tribulations but he was eventually sealed showing that perseverance in faith is what the Lord requires.

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. This is the strongest argument against the Jews who gloried in their physical connection to Abraham. If Abraham was not justified by circumcision or the works of the law then how could they be? Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all. Abraham is the father of all believers, Jew and Gentile alike who are justified by faith thru grace. Catholics and Protestants have so many understandings of grace that it would be

beneficial to go thru some of the major ideas. Saving grace is the grace that saves an individual or redeems them and is only applied to believers. Prevenient grace is the Arminian understanding of grace that precedes conversion. This grace precedes any human decision.

Cooperating grace is another Arminian grace that is given at conversion and involves some kind of cooperation between God and the individual. This grace is resistible. Irresistible grace is the Calvinist understanding of grace that is given to the elect. This grace cannot be resisted and is sometimes called efficacious grace. Common grace is a grace that is common to the whole human race. It benefits everyone without distinction to unbelievers and believers. Cheap grace is seen by many as a profession of faith without any fruit or benefit in the life. When we boil this all down there are really only two types of grace being common and saving. Common grace is given to every person who comes into the world. The purpose of this grace is to lead sinners to Christ and his gospel. Now we know that the vast majority never come to Christ or repentance so grace can be resisted. But for those who are led to conversion they receive saving grace. The only real difference between the two is in quantity. Saving grace is a hundred fold increase over common grace by the power of the Holy Spirit and enables the babe in Christ to grow to maturity.

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. Hope is the elder brother of faith. Faith is believing and trusting in things which cannot be seen and hope is the confident expectation of their fulfillment. There is actually a verse in the bible that says - For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Rom. 8:24 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. The case is closed and the verdict has been rendered. Abraham was justified by faith alone. Now for the chorus of boos by the law keepers as they quote the book of James. I actually have no problem with James. Genuine faith always produces fruit. No love equals no faith.