

Abraham to You (4:23,24)

The Relevance of the Old Testament (4:23)

4:23 *Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him...*

- “...not for his sake only...” Father Abraham. Our father not through biology, ethnicity, nationality, culture, or any other worldly means. He is our father when we believe as he believed (4:11,12; Galatians 3:29).
- What are your greatest allegiances? Is your greatest allegiance to Christ and the global family of the ages that confesses Him alone for salvation? Or are there other loyalties greater than this?
- “...was it written...” Remember, the apostle has just quoted Genesis 15:6 three times (Romans 4:3,9,22)! If the Holy Spirit hasn’t gotten your attention with the fact that this verse teaches something critically important, what does He have to do?!
- Biblical Christianity is an ancient faith, and the whole Book is Christian. The pages are not filled with history for history’s sake, but are all inspired by the Holy Spirit to show God’s sovereign control and plan throughout human history to save a people for Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.¹ Every page prior to Christ’s coming leans toward that goal. Every page afterwards explains it and applies it to our lives.²

Credited, Not Earned (4:24a)

4:24a *...but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited...*

- What “will be credited”? **Righteousness – a right standing before God in this life and eternity.**

¹ READ Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

² “The revelation to Abraham was concerning a Christ to come; the revelation to us is concerning a Christ already come, which difference in the revelation does not alter the case” Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

- Nobody can gain this righteousness before God on their own: “...there is none righteous, not even one” (3:10).
- To be unrighteous (guilty of breaking God’s Law) is to be receiving His wrath both now and forever: “...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (1:18).
- The only way for the unrighteous (us) to stand righteous before God is to have the righteousness of another “credited” to us. Jesus, in His life on earth, lived a perfectly righteous life of absolute obedience to God’s Law. When we put our faith in Jesus, His righteousness is credited to us, and we stand before God rightly.³

God – Narrowly Defined (4:24b)

4:24b *...as those who believe in Him Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead...*

- Faith that leads to us, as sinners, acquitted before God’s throne of judgment now and forever (justification), is not in a generic, vague idea of “God.” It is narrowly defined and specific. Just as Abraham “believed [in] God, Who gives life to the dead” (4:17), we, too, are made right with God (justified) solely by believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the power of God.
- “Abraham’s faith was in the promise of a descendant; our faith is in what God says one of his descendants has

³ We must remind ourselves of this every day, or we will begin to think we have right standing (and all the blessings that come with it) before God because we’ve been “good” today or because we are more moral/ethical than others. We only stand forgiven, blessed, and accepted before God because we are robed in the righteousness of Christ both now and forever. Every moment is a testament to His amazing grace in Christ. We dare not steal that glory by thinking we’ve earned anything before God, ever.

achieved. This is the promise which is to define our reality and shape our lives.”⁴

- “...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:9,10).

Christ Died for Our Sins (4:25a)...

4:25a...He Who was delivered over because of our transgressions...

The God Who Is Absolutely Sovereign Over All

- Who “delivered [Jesus] over”? Judas Iscariot, the betrayer from among the twelve disciples, is said to have “delivered” Jesus to those who came to arrest Him.⁵ The Jewish leaders are said to have “delivered” Jesus over to the Greeks for execution.⁶
- On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached a message telling everyone exactly Who delivered Jesus over: “Jesus the Nazarene...delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power...repent, and each of you be baptized in the

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Romans 1-7 For You* (Epsom, England: the Good Book Company, 2014), 106.

⁵ Matthew 10:4; 17:22; 20:18; 26:15,16,21,23,24,25,45,46,48; 27:3,4; Mark 3:19; 14:10,18,21,41,42,44; Luke 22:4,6,21,22,48; John 6:64,71; 12:4; 13:2,11,21; 18:2,5,36; 19:11; 21:20.

⁶ Matthew 20:19; 26:2; 27:2,18,26; Mark 9:31; 10:33; 15:1,10,15; Luke 9:44; 18:32; 20:20; 23:25; 24:7,20; John 18:30,35; 19:16.

name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:22-24,38).⁷

- After Peter and John were arrested for preaching salvation through Jesus Christ alone and then released, they met with the Church and told them what had happened. The Church then “lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, ‘...truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, Whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur’” (Acts 4:24,27,28).
- **If the greatest crime in human history – the execution of the Son of God – happened exactly according to God’s absolute sovereign plan, then everything that happens in human history (and your life) is accomplished according to the same power and plan.**⁸

⁷ See also Peter’s second sermon in Acts 3:13-19.

⁸ “God hath decreed in Himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree... God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not

God Acted On Behalf of Ungodly Sinners

- Not only is He the God Who has absolute power, even over death itself, but He is the God *“Who justifies the ungodly”* (4:5). That’s us.
- God the Father *“delivered over”* His Son *“because of our transgressions.”*
 - His Son was not guilty – sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
 - We were guilty of violating God’s Law, and deserved the curse of that Law – eternal separation from God.

Old Testament Background

- Paul is echoing the Servant Song of Isaiah:
*53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...*
*53:4...surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;*

anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence; yet by the same providence He ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently (1689 Baptist Confession, 3.1; 5.1,2). In other words, God (the “first cause” of all things), in accordance with His eternal plan, used the freely-chosen actions of “second causes” (Judas, the Jewish leaders, Pontius Pilate) to accomplish His eternal and unchanging will. They were still culpable for their role in Jesus’ death, and God was not guilty of the evil. Despite this, it all happened by God’s sovereign plan. We shouldn’t be surprised that this is mysterious and mind-boggling. He is God! He is the One Who says, *“My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways...for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8,9). We read the Scripture, accept it is true by faith, try to assemble its revelation in a way that is faithful to all of it (as in the confession above), and ultimately confess, *“our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases”* (Psalm 115:3).

*Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him...
53:8b...He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due...
53:11b...the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.
53:12b...He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.*

This Is Love

- We only know true love when we contemplate the Gospel of God giving His Son to wrath in the place of those who have rejected His rule and worship.⁹ *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:9).
- If you think Christ died for you because you were good, or lovely, or worthy, then you don’t know the Gospel or God’s love. It is grace-filled, undeserved, and incredible.

...He Was Raised on the Third Day (4:25b)

4:25b...and was raised because of our justification.

⁹ READ John 3:16; 1 John 4:9,10.

- The Good News isn't complete, and isn't even Good News, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Old Testament Background

- The Day of Atonement is the mountaintop high point of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses). It was on this day that the priest, representative of the covenant people of God, came into the very presence of God – man in God's fellowshiping presence for the first time since the expulsion from the garden.
- The priest's survival in the presence of God and his exiting the Holy of holies is proof that God has accepted the atonement for the people's sins: “*Then [Aaron the high priest] shall slaughter...the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil...He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities. When he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly...then he shall go out...*” (Leviticus 16:15-18).¹⁰
- Jesus' death on the cross is the fulfillment toward which the Day of Atonement pointed for 1,400 years.¹¹

¹⁰ His coming out of the tabernacle was accompanied by blessing for the people and the very presence of God: READ Leviticus 9:23. Jesus, because He is risen, bring us all the blessings of God (Ephesians 1:3).

¹¹ “...Jesus was the point of the story long before He arrived on the world scene...that is just what God asked of the ancient people of Israel: to put their faith and hope in a Redeemer and Messiah Who would not make His appearance for more than a thousand years...one

Whereas the Old Testament high priest entered the Holy of holies once a year to symbolically bring a sinful people safely into God's presence, our eternal New Testament High Priest entered God's presence once for all to bring us spiritually and continually into God's presence.¹²

Assurance

- If we are ever in doubt about our right standing before God as believers, we only have to consider the testimony of the empty tomb (READ Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-21:14; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-7).¹³
- If God had not accepted Jesus' full payment for your sin, He would still be in the tomb, for “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). He would still be dead if “*the wages*” of your “*sin*” had not been exacted.

of the most significant ways He helped an ancient people to believe was by giving them a series of feasts or festivals that would shape both their daily life and their annual calendars...the feasts, commissioned twelve hundred years before Jesus came, were celebrations about Him...the Day of Atonement defines just what being saved really means.” John R. Sittema, *Meeting Jesus at the Feast* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 2010), pgs. 10-11.

¹² READ Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:19-25.

¹³ By the way, Jesus taught that we should have an assurance about our own forgiveness in how completely we forgive others: READ Matthew 6:12,14,15; 18:21-35. A person who holds grudges against those who have repented and sought forgiveness is a person who is either immature in their understanding of God's grace in Christ or doesn't know it at all.