

“Faith’s Character”
Romans - the Gospel of God
Romans 4:13-25
The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.
December 10, 2021

Jeff: Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are God and that You revealed Yourself so mightily to us both in nature and in Your word. Father, we’re thankful especially for the revelation in Your word because in Adam we suppressed the truth revealed in nature in unrighteousness. And we hold it down and hold down the knowledge of the Author of all things. And yet with Your own Spirit You open our eyes according to the special revelation that You’ve given, according to the gospel. You enable us to see who You are, Lord, as Creator and Redeemer. Father, as we bow before You, we bow before You as God, but only that. As we stand in union with Jesus Christ, we bow before You as Father, as Redeemer. And we’re so thankful for that. And as we bow before You today, Lord, we come to You as You’ve revealed Yourself through Your word. And so we study it and we seek to know more of what it says. We ask, Lord, that You’ll bless us in that study, not only that we might have it more cognitively than we did before, but Lord, we also pray that Your Spirit would take this word up and warm our hearts and change our lives.

We pray, Father, that You would give us feet and hands to do Your will. We pray, Father, that You will cause us to be a light, a light in a dark world. And Lord, as the world does in many ways seem to grow darker, we ask that Your gospel would shine brighter. Father, there are many who would light their own light, and in Isaiah You condemn that. And You call us to put our trust in the only Light who is the Light to the nations, the Lord Jesus. And so we come this morning, affirming our trust in the Lord.

And Lord, we ask that You’ll be with those who are on our minds. We think about Bob and we pray for him, asking that Your hand would be upon him for good, and that You would guard Him, even today, in Your word. Father, we pray for Pete and ask for Your hand to be upon him for healing. And certainly, Father, we think of Barbara this morning who has dealt with pain for many years. We pray that this surgery would be a relief to her.

Father we ask these things and we commit them to You, knowing that You are all-wise, good and powerful. And we may not understand the outcome, at least in this world. But we commit it to You because we know that not only are You good, but You are wise in everything, and we’re thankful for that.

Father, again we’re thankful for Ted being with us and for the success of his surgery. We pray, Father, that he would continue to experience the good benefits of that. Father, we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. So I wanted to turn to Romans chapter 4. And I want us to look at verse 13 through the end of the chapter. So let me have you turn there and I’ll read God’s word. Maybe next week we’ll do a Christmas theme. I don’t know; we’ll see.

Don Maurer: Oh, that would be great! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: That would be great.

Don: Yes, it would.

Jeff: All right. Well let me read this. *“For the promise to Abraham and his offspring, that he would be heir of the world, did not come through the law but through the*

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righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath,. But where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace, to be guaranteed to all his offspring, not only to the adherents of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. As it is written: ‘I have made you the father of many nations,’ in the presence of God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

“In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told: ‘So shall your offspring be.’ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. That is why ‘his faith was counted to him as righteousness.’

“But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Ted: Excellent!

Jeff: I even said it with a pause like I knew what I was doing.

Don Maurer: Yeah!

Ted: You even said it with the proper intonation. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay. Well, this morning I want us to think just briefly about putting this in my computer so it will actually work. *(The computer starts off audibly.)*

Don Maurer: Sounds like it’s working to me.

Jeff: Yeah, right; right. So I want us just to think about where we’ve been just to get our bearings. And I want to say this very briefly because we’ve spent a lot of time in the first part of Romans. But in Romans 1-3 we really recognize three things about God. We recognize who God is; He’s righteous. We recognize what God does; He judges righteously. And we recognize what God gives; He bestows righteousness—a righteousness that we could not have through obedience to the law. But we have it by faith.

And so that brings us to chapter 4. And remember, that’s where the Jews pulled out the trump card of Abraham and said, “But you’re not remembering Abraham.”

And Paul says, “Okay, let’s think about Abraham.” And so that’s what he starts to do; he starts to think about Abraham. And he starts to ask the question: what about Abraham? Was Abraham justified after he did something, after he was circumcised? Or was it before his circumcision that he was justified? And of course Paul says it was before his circumcision, that salvation might not only be to the Jew but also to the Gentile.

And so that’s where we are in the midst of the argument. We’re still sort of in that portion of chapter 4 where Paul is dealing with the trump card of the Jews—the Abraham card. And then in chapter 5 we’re going to move on from there. But this is where we are in the midst of chapter 4.

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So what I want us to do today is to finish up chapter 4. And I want us to look at the promise that’s going to unfold here. Now I think you need to understand something about the lay of the land, because he’s going to talk to us about the sweep of redemptive history in such a way that I think we’re going to need to understand the backdrop of it.

Maybe you’ve heard me say this before; that’s okay. But I want you to remember that when you think about the flow of covenant history, one of the things that you have to bear in mind is that there are two covenants. There is the covenant of works. And that covenant of works is what we find in Genesis 1, 2 and 3. That covenant was given to Adam in the garden. And Adam was given a law he must keep: “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat of it you will die.” There is the penalty. “And if you don’t eat from it, if you refrain from eating, you will have life.” There’s the promise.

So we have a precept—“Don’t eat from the tree in the middle of the garden”, a penalty—death—and a promise, life.

Those are the things that we find. You know as well as I’d that Adam eats and he falls. And in falling God comes to him and cuts a new covenant, but not with him. The covenant of grace is really a benefit of the covenant that the Father makes with the Son. The Son is now the second Adam, the new Adam. We find that in 1 Corinthians 15. He’s the second Adam or the last Adam.

And I won’t say more about that, other than to say that you could divide the Scriptures up into the two Adams story: the first Adam. And then Genesis 3 forward is about the second Adam. So it’s the two Adams story.

But this two Adams story unfolds not just for Christ, but it unfolds for us. In other words, the second Adam is working on our behalf. And then in His work He includes us in the benefits. And so He works to receive the benefits and then bestows those benefits freely upon us. But the Scriptures give us that benefit package in terms of an unfolding historical redemptive plan. In other words, when you read about this benefit package that Christ the second Adam earns for us, what you get is, you get a history of how it comes to us. And it comes to us by way of covenants.

And you know the covenants by now. The covenants are: Noah, and what’s next?

Bishop Rodgers: Abraham.

Jeff: Abraham. And then what’s next?

Don Maurer: Moses.

Jeff: Moses. And then who’s next?

Sig Tragard: David.

Jeff: David. And then what’s next?

Sig: Jesus.

Jeff: Yes, the new covenant in Christ. All right; I don’t even need to do this. You guys have this down. Yes?

Transcriber’s Note: Sig asks Jeff a question while his back was turned.

Sig: I’m sorry.

Jeff: That’s okay. You scared me.

Sig: I saw you with your back turned; that’s not fair. Are you okay?

Jeff: Yeah, I’m okay.

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Sig: Maybe this isn’t the right time to interject this. But you talked earlier about the covenant of grace that the Father makes with the Son. Is this a time to talk about the eternal covenant?

Jeff: So the covenant of redemption is what the Father and the Son enter into. And it stands behind the covenant of grace. So—

Sig: Before the Fall, right? I mean, with this eternal covenant I’ve heard theologians talk about as made before the foundation of the earth. Is there a different time for us to talk about it?

Jeff: We need to talk about that at a different time because here’s what we’re going to get into when we talk about that. Maybe what we should do is that at some point we should have a class on Trinitarian theology, because this will get us into thinking about ontological aspects of the Trinity and the economic aspects of the Trinity, and how the covenant is not in the ontological; it’s part of the economic decree.

Don Maurer: Define *ontological*, Jeff; there might be people—

Jeff: No, not right now.

Don: All right. *(Laughter)* That’s a great question; it really is. But I think it would take us really far afield. Maybe for Christmas we’ll talk about the ontological Trinity. *(Laughter)* I’m not putting you off.

Sig: I just didn’t know where to fit it in.

Jeff: No, that’s great. So what I want you to notice is, I want you to notice that between Abraham and the New Covenant what we find is that we find the introduction of something that perplexes us all, and that is the law. And it perplexes us because what we have here with Abraham is promise. And what we find with Christ is the fulfillment of that promise. In fact, when you think about the word *promise* you think about the prefix pre- which means before, or throw, and then *mitari*. What does *mitari* mean?

Don Maurer: I don’t know. It’s an old video game. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: To throw forward. A promise is to throw something forward. So if I say to my son that I promise that I’ll get you a bike for your birthday, then what I’m doing is, I’m promising him the bike. But if my word is good then I’m throwing the fulfillment of that ahead in time. I’m promising him that on this particular date that will come to pass. Am I not right? You’re looking at me like—

Ted: No, I like it. I’m just thinking very deeply about what you’re saying. The other thought is that we have these covenants. But isn’t it a fact that there always is the covenant of law?

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: Christ fulfills that covenant. It’s not like He works up a new system.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: He both pays the penalty for the violation of the law and He Himself fulfills the law perfectly.

Jeff: Yes; that’s right.

Ted: That’s what I’m teaching my Sunday school class.

Jeff: Excellent. There you go; that’s wonderful stuff. So what we have here is that we have the promise given, but we have the law introduced. And then what we have is, we have the promise fulfilled in Christ.

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And the question that Paul asks himself—and this really comes out of what happens to the Jews as they begin to think about the law. Remember, what happens is that in this period they are given a law. But they are also given alongside of the law the sacrificial system. And the sacrificial system goes in tandem with the law. Why? Because the law drives you to see your sin. And the sacrifice drives you to see the Substitute for your sin—the One who not only keeps the law, but the One who bears the curse of our having broken the law.

And so this is a perplexing thing for a guy like Paul who has come to believe that his own law keeping satisfies the righteous requirements of God. So this is why he has to rethink the law. And I think this is why in two different books of the New Testament he says to his recipients, “Why the law?”

You know, this is not an empty abstract question. For Paul this was real. Why the law? The law is given that it might drive us to the promise. And that’s what stands behind all of this discussion. This law stands in our way in one sense, if we believe that we can keep it and so be righteous before the living God. So it’s an impediment because we’re an impediment in our understanding. Or it’s a facilitator. It facilitates our movement toward the promise because it shows us our inadequacy to keep any righteous requirement of the law ourselves. And so that’s the idea here. That’s what’s going to stand in the background, okay? Yes?

Ted: Jeff, the law is meant to make us desperate.

Jeff: Yeah! That’s right.

Ted: I mean, God said to Abraham, “Walk blameless before me.” Blameless?

Jeff: Yeah. But even the thing about that is, that’s chapter 17 of Genesis. Chapter 15 was “I’ll secure your blessedness for you. Now walk before me blameless,” right? “And the inadequacies of your own walk are covered by what I’m going to do in chapter 15.”

Ted: If anybody just kind of thought about it existentially, if you’re really honest with yourself, you’ll say, “No matter what sacrifice I make, it is just not enough.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: You know Cain. “*My punishment is greater than I can bear.*”

Jeff: Yeah, yeah; absolutely.

Bishop: Jeff, I would just like to take a moment to cite and turn for us to verse 15. “*For the law brings wrath.*” We all understand that.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop: “*But where there is no law there is no transgression.*” When is there never a law?

Jeff: Yeah; that’s great. And this is probably just as good of a place as any to bring that up. So let’s think for a minute about the two-Adam Christology. When you think about salvation you often think about salvation by grace. But salvation is in fact by works, right? Salvation was to be by the work of Adam the First in the covenant of works. How? By the keeping of the precept, right? “Do not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Do not eat of that tree.”

Ted: Easy enough.

Jeff: Easy enough.

Ted: Simple.

Jeff: Simple; just don’t do it.

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Ted: “You can do everything else; just don’t do this one.”

Jeff: You know what happened, right? *“The woman You gave me.” (Laughter)*

Ted: Near the baptistery there is a place that sells pizza with a great bronze door, and that pictures this. And there is a frame. And there is a crowd up on one corner and there is a finger pointing up like that. It’s the finger of God pointing to Adam. With one hand Adam is covering his privates, and with the other hand he’s pointing to Eve. *(Laughter)* Eve is covering her privates, and with the other hand she’s pointing to the serpent. And the serpent is there losing his legs. *(Laughter))Unclear)*

Jeff: Well you know, the thing about it is that once we get to chapter 5 the blame falls squarely upon Adam. That’s the covenant head, right? But salvation could have been in Adam.

Here’s the one thing I want you to know. And this is hypothetical because it didn’t happen. But the point is that Adam could have earned salvation; it’s as simple as that. He didn’t. And so the second Adam comes. Let’s say it like this. Not only does the second Adam have to do what the first Adam failed to do—that is, offer obedience. But now He has to become a curse for failed obedience. So that’s what we talk about when we talk about the active obedience of Christ. He has to offer obedience. And when we talk about the passive obedience of Christ, He has to become the curse of the law for us.

So when we think about salvation, we think about salvation by works. And so this is where the covenant of redemption enters in. The covenant between Father and Son was a works covenant.

However, the covenant of grace which is between us and the Redeemer is a gracious covenant. In other words we receive in Christ what He earned, okay? So our salvation is based on works. But we receive the benefits freely in Christ.

So when you ask the question or make the statement “When was there never a law?”, there was always law. And there was always law because (and I’m sure you know this from being with Bruce), the law is a righteous manifestation of the character of God. And so there was always law even before the Fall. And the law sort of epitomized and had a point put on it in that precept not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or you will die. You obey and you’ll have life. Adam fails and then the second Adam comes along, and perfectly obeys. So does that make sense? Okay, Don had something.

Don Maurer: I was going to ask the same thing, because there has obviously always been a law. The law was written on their hearts. And so the people before Moses were just as culpable as the people who had been given the law at Sinai.

Jeff: Yes; this is romans chapter 2, remember? God through Paul is saying to the Jew and to the Gentile that God is an impartial Judge, and He will judge you all. And the Gentile says, “Wait a minute! How are we to be judged when we didn’t have the law?”

And that’s why at the end of chapter 2 he says, “No, no, no; you did have the law. The law was written upon your hearts.”

Bishop: But it says here in verse 1e, *“Where there is no law.”* What does that mean? There is always the law.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop: So what is he saying? What is verse 15 trying to tell us?

Jeff: Well, I think it’s one of those things where I’ll put it like this. I don’t think there is a time where there is no law, and I’ll tell you why.

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Bishop: But look what he says. Why would Paul talk about no law?

Ted: He just slipped there.

Don Maurer: Uh-oh!

Jim Hamilton: *“Where there is no law there is no transgression.”*

Jeff: Yeah. Well, let’s go back through the text and we can work through that and see if it works out in the sense of the text.

David Miller: Before God told Adam not to eat of the fruit, maybe that was no form of transgression.

Jeff: I didn’t hear what you said. I’m sorry, Dave.

David: Before God told Adam not to eat of the fruit there was no possibility of transgression.

Jeff: Well, there was the possibility of transgression. There was the possibility of it. There was no actual transgression.

David: But before God told them not to eat of the fruit, let’s say there was a negative average given. And he didn’t receive any instruction not to eat of the fruit. Is that something we shouldn’t ask?

Ted: That’s not what the bishop thinks. *(Laughter)*

Bishop: I was thinking of one possible understanding of this. And that is that what he’s saying is that since there is always judgment, and since we’re always guilty, therefore with this description there is no transgression. There has always been transgression; therefore there has always been law.

Jeff: Yes. I think that’s definitely—

Bishop: Do you guys think he didn’t have the law? Of course they had the law. They’ve always had the law. And we have always been transgressing. Therefore we have always had the law. There was no time when there was no law; therefore no transgression.

Jeff: Yes. When you think about the flow of that text and what he says in verse 13, the promise doesn’t come through the law.

Bishop: Right.

Jeff: But it comes through the promise. Verse 14: *“For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.”* So in other words, when you think about it, it was always by promise, never by law.

Bishop: Right.

Jeff: If those who are heirs of this promise were to get it by law keeping, then it nullifies the promise. And it can’t nullify the promise.

And then he goes back and he says: *“For the law brings wrath. But where there is no law there is no transgression.”* And I actually think that’s a parenthetical statement to say, “Listen, I know what the law’s function is. The law’s function is to drive us to the promise.” And if people begin to think that they can inherit what is offered in the promise by obedience to the law, then they have misunderstood, because the law actually brings wrath. That’s the way I understand the flow of the passage, anyway. Yes?

Ron Baling: I always felt that it meant that where there is no law instituted. If I have a one-year-old I don’t enforce the law “Don’t poop your pants.” But if I have a six- or a seven-year-old, that law is enforced.

Jeff: Okay.

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Ron: Okay.

Jeff: Let me just put it this way. You have Adam standing there, okay? And you have Adam in either one condition or another. He’s either in the condition of sinner or innocent. Or I think we should probably put “non-sinner.” You’ll see why in just a second. He’s either in a position of a sinner or a non-sinner, okay?

However there is also what is called “the estate.” Now today theologically we conflate these two. And we talk about estate and condition as if they were one and the same thing. And they aren’t; they’re different.

An estate is judicial. And so if Adam is a sinner he’s only guilty in the presence of a judge. And that is his estate. If he’s a non-sinner then he’s innocent, okay. And this (a sinner) is his condition. This (innocence) is his estate.

And my point is this. There is never a time when Adam is just in a condition. He’s always in an estate. Why? Because there is the presence of a living God. And God is always Judge, whether God makes it manifest or not.

Now I’m going to say this. This is going to get a little more abstract, but I think it’s Biblical. There is a sense in which we believe this. Let’s say that prior to the annunciation of any positive law in the garden, how did God create man? God created man to receive revelation mediated through nature. But not only that,; there is what is called the *sensus divinitatus*, or the sense of divinity within man, so that he can’t make a conscious thought without thinking of the existence of God, or without assuming the existence of God.

Now let’s say that it’s just this, with no positive statement on God’s part. This *sensus divinitatus*, alone this knowledge mediated through nature, this alone is enough to make him guilty or innocent. In other words, had God never said a positive word, and yet had Adam transgressed, .. Let’s say that without a word from God that Adam killed Eve. Would he have been guilty? Yes. Had God not said a positive word to Adam—“Don’t kill this woman!”—he would have been guilty because of the revelation mediated through nature, and the revelation that he had through the *sensus divinitatus*. He would have been guilty.

Jim: But He did say, “Don’t eat the apple.”

Jeff: He did say, “Don’t eat the apple.” So here is what I would say about that. “Don’t kill Eve” is intuitive to a man created in the image of God. “Don’t eat from that particular tree” is not intuitive. It requires a positive statement on God’s part to initiate that interim period where Adam needs to obey in order to earn life. Don?

Don Maurer: It’s been said that when Adam ate from the tree he violated all ten commandments. I think there’s a lot to that.

Jeff: Okay.

Sig: He’s waiting for you to embellish on that, Don.

Don: He worshiped other gods; he worshiped that tree. He created that graven image. He took the name of the Lord in vain by not believing His word. He disobeyed his heavenly Father.

Sig: How did he commit adultery?

Don: Spiritual adultery.

Jeff: The greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor. And he did not love God, and he certainly did not love his neighbor with this act.

Don: Right.

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Jeff: In that sense everything falls into place. So you don’t have to tie it back to every particular way in which Adam transgressed, because as Sig was pointing out, and as Don answered, adultery is any sort of disloyalty to anyone who is owed loyalty, right? And so there’s a sense in which that’s a transgression. But when you go back to those basic two, .. You have one over here, Sig, right there—the guy that typically debates me, the only one besides Don that makes trouble for me. *(Laughter)*

Bryan Whittington: James 2:10: *“For whoever keeps the whole law and fails at one point has become guilty of all of it.”*

Jeff: Yeah.

Ron: So what you’ve said here is that Paul says that there is no counting of sin if there is no law. Is that what you’re saying there?

Jeff: Yeah.

Ron: There’s sin there, but there’s no counting of it. So He’s not going to punish it.

Jeff: If there is no Judge, if there is no estate, then there is no Judge, and there is no guilt. However, the Judge can determine guilt and delay punishment, as we learned in Romans 3, where it says that this is to show that God is both the just and the justifier, right? Sins committed in the past deserve the punishment that is put upon Christ. But that punishment is delayed until Christ comes, to show that He is both just and the justifier.

Ron: Many times in Romans Paul says that we are declared righteous. To be declared righteous is not actually to be righteous.

Jeff: And that’s it, because—

Bishop: Whoa, whoa, whoa!

Ron: I’m still a sinner but I’m declared righteous. In heaven I will become righteous.

Jeff: Maybe the bishop’s understanding is different. My understanding is that we are sinners—all of us.

Ron: Right.

Jeff: But in union with Christ we are justified.

Ron: Right.

Jeff: Bishop, do you understand it differently than that?

Bishop: No; that’s right.

Don Maurer: It is a real righteousness that we have.

Bishop: It is a real righteousness.

Jeff: It is righteousness.

Bishop: That’s right.

Sig: Go ahead.

Bishop: No, I was just agreeing with Jeff.

Jeff: I love to see Sig running back and forth. *(Laughter)*

Bishop: We talk about sanctification.

Ted: Or just existentially as we experience life. We act it out very darkly. But in essence we are seated with him in the heavenlies. I don’t get to go to heaven unless I’m righteous.

Jeff: You know, isn’t that interesting! I just want you to think about this for a second. Ted’s reference is Colossians 3:1-4, where Paul says that we are *“raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places.”*

Ted: Right.

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Jeff: But it’s interesting; think about this. He talks about himself as if he’s in the heavenly places. And then he encourages them. “Now set your minds where you are.” And I think that’s really interesting, because we often have that little quip: “He’s so heavenly-minded that he’s no earthly good.” And 1-4 seems to indicate that I’m already in heaven, but my mind is still on earth. And my mind had better catch up with where I am. That’s kind of interesting. Ted?

Bishop: You’ll do a lot better on earth if your mind is set on heaven. It’s just the opposite; I think they’ve got it backwards.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: And it’s not as if our minds are in heaven, as if we haven’t attained it. We have attained it, but in essence. That’s why—

Jeff: Yeah. And it’s because He has attained it for us. So I need to reach for what I have.

Ted: “*For me to live is Christ.*” And where the Master is, there will the servant be also.

Jeff: Yes; that’s right.

Ted: I believe that.

Bishop: It could be that where there is no promulgated law, where there is not the Ten Commandments, there is no consciousness of transgression. There is transgression.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop: Another way of talking about the law is that it drives us to the Savior.

Jeff: Yes. I mean, when you think about Adam’s condition in the garden prior to receiving the positive statement, “Don’t eat from the tree,” which initiates a probationary period,— Think about if God would have said, “I’m not going to say anything to them about this probationary period yet.” Would that have given Adam a pass to sin in the garden? No! He would still had to have obeyed the precepts that he understood through nature and according to his own understanding in terms of the *sensus divinitatus*. But there would have been no probationary period wherein God would have said, “Now if you obey in this period of time I’ll give your life. And you won’t have to worry about this sin/not sin. If you obey, then you won’t be able to sin after that. You’ll only be able to render good.” And so there’s a sense in which there’s a difference because of the probationary period instituted or initiated by God.

Okay, well let’s get to the text! (*Laughter*) I’m kidding; this has actually been really good.

Sig: One more question, Jeff.

Jeff: Actually we’re working through the text.

Don Bishop: When you talk about the *sensus divinitatus*, I think that’s why in every society that murder is considered wrong.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Homosexuality is okay; other things are okay, but not murder. If there is no God, why is murder wrong?

Jeff: Yes. And you know, it’s amazing when you think about the stuff that goes on. The Marxist professors like redistribution of wealth until they get a pay cut to redistribute their wealth. “That’s not fair!” Our inner sense of righteousness is amazing.

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So we’ve already been through the first few verses. Let’s jump down. I’m going to hope that you’re just as animated for the next set of verses, 18-22. This is where I want to talk about *the character of faith*. And instead of throwing some slides up on the board, let me just ask you. If you look at 18-22. And you see the character of faith that Abraham possesses. What are some of the distinguishing features of that? What are some of the distinguishing features of his faith?

Bishop: He asked God to do that which could not be done except by God.

Jeff: Okay. So what would you call that? What would you say that is?

Bishop: Faith in His word.

Jeff: Okay, faith in His word. So there’s a belief in the promise of God, right? When you think about what is thrown forward and what is fulfilled, it’s the word of God, right?

And let’s just take a minute to stop here a second and say that if this is not what we understand it to be, if it’s not inspired of God, if it’s not from an infallible God who is true, if it hasn’t been preserved from error, then there’s no sense in believing in this Word because what happens is, it becomes a word based upon our judgment as to what is true and what is not.

In other words, we’re getting to a point today where there’s homosexuality and there’s transgenderism and all that sort of thing. And what do we say? We say, “Well, the Bible speaks to that.” And what do progressive, liberal folks say? They say, “Wait a minute. That’s culturally conditioned,” right?

Or how about male headship? “No, no, no; that’s culturally conditioned. Paul was probably a little bit chauvinistic. That whole male headship thing is part and parcel of a past culture; it’s not an enlightened culture’s position.”

And when you get to that point, then you can parse up this word and you can get rid of that. And we’ll keep this, but we’re going to get rid of that, and so on. And all of a sudden, if that’s the way it is, I’m out of this. If that’s the way it is, I’m done. I don’t want to spend my life trying to live by my own wisdom. I have too many pleasures that I can satisfy and fill that are hedonistic and sinful. And if I’m not going to judge by God for engaging in those, then I’ll just engage in those. I mean, frankly, “*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*”

But if that book is true, and if it’s true throughout because it’s from an infallible God, then there are times where I’m going to be uncomfortable in my life because of it. But I know that my life is hidden in Christ, and my life is continually being shaped according to the will of the living God. It’s as simple as that. When I fail I have forgiveness. And I get back on the horse and I ride a little further. That was a joke, but what are you going to do? *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: (Our recording equipment did not work, so Don Maurer, our Transcriber summarizes) At this point Don Maurer commented about the parallel between Abraham’s faith regarding God’s promise that he and Sarah would have a son in their old age and what saving faith involves, both of them being impossible apart from God. There was a continuing discussion between the bishop, Ted and Jeff on the importance of the word of God. Don Maurer then commented on the last two verses of Romans chapter 4: that these words were not written for Abraham alone but for us. Jeff concluded in prayer and there was applause.