This entire chapter is dedicated to reaffirming and illustrating that justification, righteous and salvation come not by keeping the Law or some other set of rules and regulations, but through faith in what God has ALREADY DONE! In chapter 1 Paul used a quote from the prophetic book Habakkuk to illustrate his point that righteousness (salvation) comes by faith. This chapter uses two additional OT precedents, one from the Law and the other from the Writings to explain that a person is saved by the ‘righteousness which comes by faith’. The chapter is homiletically outlined below.

- Boasting is Eliminated {vv. 1-3}
- Belief is Essential {vv. 4-8}
- Blessedness is Explained {vv. 9-15}
- Benefits are Expounded {vv. 16-18}
- Belief is Expressed {vv. 19-22}
- Blessedness is Extended {vv. 23-25}

vv. 1-3 ➤ Abraham’s Faith is the Model for How Righteousness is Obtained

[1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 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 accounted to him for righteousness”.

Boasting is Eliminated

Previously {Rom. 3:21-22}, Paul has already stated that, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe”.

‘Righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed’ is a major point Paul is making in this section of his letter. How is it revealed? Well, as is stated in Rom. 3:21 through the ‘Law and the Prophets’. Now by “the Law” Paul is referring to a section of scripture which includes the first five books of the Bible also known as the PENTATEUCH or TORAH. These are books that Moses authored; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. By “the Prophets” Paul is referring to the section of scripture that includes all the prophetical books from Isaiah to Malachi.

Paul is reaffirming that salvation, our justification or righteousness in God’s sight, comes by faith—not the works of the Law because the flesh cannot handle that. But he is also reminding us that this is not something ‘new’ but is attested to, spoken of, by the PROPHETS and the LAW itself! [Paul is also going to quote from the poetical section of scripture].

This is somewhat ironic in that many Jews were (and still are) basing their righteousness on keeping the Law which, as Paul will emphasize, actually testifies that it is through faith that a person is made ‘righteous’!

Note that Paul has already given one example from the PROPHETS by quoting from Habakkuk in Rom.1:17: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’.” {Hab. 2:4}
In this chapter Paul is going to give us two additional OT precedents, one from the Law and the other from the Writings’ [i.e., the Psalms] that demonstrate conclusively that the OT taught salvation by faith and not on keeping the works of the Law.

Perhaps there is no better example of a ‘man of God’ or ‘a man of faith’ in the OT than Abraham. No one can surpass him in goodness of character, good deeds and a personal contact with God. The LORD refers to him as “Abraham, My friend” in Isaiah 41:8. And in Gen. 26:5 the LORD testifies of him; “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws”.

Abraham is known by Jews everywhere and revered as the ‘father of the nation of Israel’ since he was the grandfather of Jacob; who was renamed ‘Israel’ {Gen. 32:28}, the source of the 12 Tribes of Israel.

This also becomes all the more significant when one realizes that the self-righteous religious rulers and spiritual leaders [Pharisees and Sadducees] even assumed that Abraham’s righteousness was somehow inherited. Both in Matt. 3:9 and Luke 3:8 John the Baptist warns them by saying, “…..and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’ for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones”.

In other words, just because you may be descendents of Abraham does not automatically make you righteousness.

Paul now uses Abraham as a prime example to illustrate his point about how a person is saved. Every Jewish person would have been riveted to what he was going to say.

So Paul asks a very important question: “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?” If Abraham was saved by his good deeds and his outstanding character he would indeed have something to boast about—but not before God. Paul emphasizes.

In these verses Paul also reveals another reason that we are justified by faith and not works is that it humbles us and eliminates boasting on our part—God has ‘zero tolerance’ on personal boasting as it relates to salvation. The ‘work’ of salvation is one-sided—it is all done on God’s side. On the cross Jesus, the Word made flesh, God incarnate, the one who was the ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world {Rev. 13:8}’, said regarding the work of redemption, “It is finished” {John 19:30}. No mere man could ever have claimed that!

So could Abraham have boasted? In v.3 Paul asks a rhetorical question involving SCRIPTURE and he then quotes from the PENTATEUCH, the OT section of scripture referred to as “the Law”. Here he quotes from Gen. 15:6; “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness”.

APPLICATION:
It is sad and tragic that so many people today have the same self-righteous attitude as these religious leaders: “Well my father’s a preacher, he’s going to Heaven and I’m pretty sure I’m going there too”. “Both my parents are Christians and they pray for me all the time’. “I have a Bible on the coffee table, give to charitable causes and I never killed anyone”.

This sentiment will never save anyone as Paul proves scripturally in this passage.

1 This section of the OT includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ruth, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.
The scripture clearly reveals that Abraham was righteous because he believed God and God declared him to be righteous—Abraham had nothing to do with it! Therefore, Abraham could NOT credibly boast.

But what did Abraham believe? Although the LORD tells Abraham not to be afraid and that He was his defense and exceedingly great reward; Abraham had no sons so he complained that he was childless and his heir apparent was his chief steward, Eliezer. God’s response is recorded in Gen. 15:4-5:

And behold, the word of the LORD came to him saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them”. And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be”.

Note that Paul is going to refer to this as ‘THE PROMISE’ throughout his letter.

Here then is the foundational basis for salvation described in its ‘raw’ form: BELIEVE IN GOD AND IT WILL ACCOUNTED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. That is why Paul will later say,

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame”. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”—Rom. 10:6-13

The importance of this spiritual and doctrinal truth should not be underestimated which is testified by the fact that this scripture is quoted by again by Paul in his letter to the churches in Galatia (Gal. 3:6), who were struggling with false teachers, and also by James (James 2:23) in his letter to the Jewish Diaspora (ref. John 7:35) in the same context.

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2 The Greek word used here, ‘logizomai’, means to inventory; in other words God ‘inventoried’ Abraham’s heart and found it to meet the requirements of genuine faith and God assessed it as righteous.

3 The Jewish Diaspora refers to the Jews who had been dispersed through the Gentile nations in the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple in the 586 BC by the Babylonian army commanded by Nebuchadnezzar.

4 It is interesting to note also that the first instance that Paul uses in this letter to prove from the Law and Prophets that a person is saved by faith alone is a quote from Hab. 2:4; “The just shall live by faith”, which is also quoted two other times in the NT. Besides Rom. 1:17, the other two places are Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38; where the emphasis of this scripture is on the ‘who’ [the just], the ‘how’ [shall live] and the ‘what’ [by faith], respectively. This is another key spiritual and doctrinal truth on which there can be no compromise and no confusion.
vv. 4-8 ➔ **JUSTIFICATION IS NOT A WAGE ONE EARNS FOR RIGHTEOUS DEEDS**

[4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”]

**Belief is Essential**

If you are hired or contracted to do a job you expect to get paid the wages promised you. Those wages could be considered a ‘debt’ an employer owes to his employees. And if you didn’t get paid for doing the work you would be extremely upset because you expended your ‘labor’ for no ‘reward’. Paul will now look at the aspect of wages in the context of justification and demonstrate that salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is not a reward.

Regarding the consequence of sin, in Rom. 6:23 Paul says, “For the wages of sin is death”; in other words, physical death as well as separation from God spiritually. Ultimately, this refers to the judgment and condemnation of the Second Death [ref. Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8].

However, it is extremely important to note that God’s Word does not say anything about the reverse of this being true. That is, justification and salvation being a consequence of not sinning, that is, doing good deeds. In other words the God’s Word does not teach us that, “The wages of doing righteous deeds is [eternal] life.” It’s just the opposite!

For one thing God’s Word says that “We are all like an unclean thing and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags” [Isaiah 64:6]. Note it says that ALL our righteous deeds are as filthy rags in God’s sight. How then can a person be saved and have eternal life?

In the same verse [Rom. 6:23] Paul actually gives the answer when he says, “…..but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. Note that this is another key, FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINAL TRUTH!

Everywhere the scriptures speak about salvation it is always in the context of being a gift—never a debt paid for doing good works. Salvation is never spoken of as a ‘reward’ but always as a ‘gift’. And there is a significant difference between a ‘reward’ and a ‘gift’—one is based on a debt which is owed while the other is a gift based on God’s love and grace. This is a critical truth that every believer needs to understand and affirm.

One of the best known passages of scripture expressing the fact that salvation is a gift⁵, which is often quoted during evangelistic meetings, is Ephesians 2:8-9:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”.

This ties in perfectly with v.2 where Paul tells us that if Abraham had been justified by works he would have something to boast about—BUT NOT BEFORE GOD!

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⁵ For example, Paul writes to the young elder Titus and says, “…..that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” {Titus 3:7}.
So reviewing, in v. 4 Paul is saying that a person who thinks they can perform good deeds as ‘work’ to earn their salvation [their ‘wage’ for doing good deeds] is operating under the false assumption that salvation comes as a debt God owes. Yet there is a problem with this because the Bible tells us in Rom 11:35 that, “Who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again?” In other words, God never is in a position where He is obligated to pay someone back for what they have done. So how is salvation, eternal life, obtained?

Notice that Paul is giving us the basis of obtaining eternal life by referring to ‘grace’—basically salvation a ‘gift’ to be received [i.e., believed]. If salvation is a gift than it stands to reason that it cannot be earned! The apostle will elaborate on this in chapter 11 where he says,

Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”—Rom. 11:5-6

In Gal. 3:11 Paul tells us that, “The just shall live by faith”. In the very next verse of this scripture passage, obviously to drive this point home, he says, “Yet the law is not of faith, but the man who does them shall live by them”. The Law does not require faith—you just perform to its requirements. Therefore, since the just shall live by faith, the logical conclusion should be that no one can be saved by keeping the works of the Law.

Indeed, Paul has just told us in the last chapter {vv.20, 28} that:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin…..Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

Previously Paul used Abraham’s faith experience to show that by believing God his faith was accounted for genuine righteousness.

Now Paul extends this truth to every believer in Jesus Christ when he says that anyone who believes on the One who justifies the ungodly [which assumes that the person recognized he/she is ungodly] their faith will also be accounted for righteousness—just as Abraham’s faith was!

In further support for his previous statement in Rom. 3:21, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets”, Paul now quotes King David’s words as evidence for justification coming by faith.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity…..”—Psalms 32:1-2

The man whose transgression [lawless deeds] is forgiven is doubly blessed—his sin is covered and his lawless deeds are no longer credited against him.

The other Psalm written by David expressing his repentance also expresses the same truth that salvation is not a matter of the Law but of the heart is:

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6 What makes this scripture more noteworthy is that it occurs within the context of David’s expression of his repentance of the sins he committed in having an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and then having her husband, Uriah, murdered!
For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; you do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.—**Psalms 51:16-17**

These scriptures reaffirm that even **after** the Law had been given [over 400 years after the Abraham’s declaration of faith] that the forgiveness of sins comes from God’s undeserved mercy and not through any works a person does.

Note that Paul associates the forgiveness of sins with the blessedness of justification and salvation. True blessing and salvation came not through doing good deeds but from God who ‘credits’ man’s faith with His righteousness by grace.

David understood this truth and lived this truth even though during his time the animal sacrifices where taken place according to the Law.

Paul is demonstrated that justification apart from the Law is nothing new. All the major sections of OT scripture; the Law, the Prophets and even the Writings of OT Jewish scripture support his argument that justification and righteousness are not earned as a reward but credited as a gift. Therefore, this truth should come as no surprise to the Jews.

Belief/faith is essential for the forgiveness of sins, justification, righteousness and salvation.

The debt of our sin could only be satisfied by the blood of Jesus Christ as Paul has told us in **Rom. 3:24-25**; “...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [an appeasement] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness.....”

**vv. 9-15 ➤ The Blessedness of Salvation Comes Through a Promise**

[9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? 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 still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. 13 For the promise that he would 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 those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.]

**Blessedness is Explained**

The biggest distinction between the Jew and Gentile during this time was circumcision. It eventually became an issue of contention between the true Gospel and a false gospel preached by the Judaizers.

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7 Refer also to **1 Sam. 15:22**; Then Samuel said: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams”.

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Examples:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.—Gal. 1:6-8

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.....And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!—Gal. 5:6, 11-12

This issue was a big deal to Peter because at first he didn’t think that the Gospel should be going to the Gentiles until God gave him the vision of the ‘Great Sheet’ in Acts 11. After Peter had learned his lesson he testifies that

“If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”—Acts 11:17-18

The issue over circumcision seriously threatened to sidetrack evangelism to the Gentiles and split the early church for in Acts we read:

So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses”.—Acts 15:3-5

The solution involved recognizing the fact that the keeping the Law could not save a person:

And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”..... “So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things’. ‘Known to God from eternity are all His works’. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God”..... “but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.”—Acts 15:7-10, 17-20

Since Paul has stated that Abraham was declared righteous by believing the LORD [apart from the deeds of the Law] he now proves it by asking a simple question. Was Abraham circumcised or uncircumcised when he received the promise of blessing?

The answer of course is while he was uncircumcised—just like a Gentile! Abraham did not receive the Covenant of Circumcision until at least 14 years after the promise of Gen. 15:5 was given; as recorded in Gen. 17:10-14. We know this based on the chronology that the
promise was given (a) before Ishmael was conceived [which happened sometime after\(^8\)], (b) it took 9 months until Ishmael was born and (c) Ishmael was 13 years old [ref. Gen. 17:25] when the sign of circumcision was given.

In this way Abraham’s experience of salvation through faith in God’s promise would be the prototype or example for all, both the Gentiles [the ‘uncircumcised’] and the Jews [the ‘circumcised’], who simply trust God and believe.

In v.12 of this passage of scripture Paul refers to Abraham as ‘the father of circumcision’; not only to the Jews [the ‘circumcised’] but also to the Gentiles [the ‘uncircumcised’] who have followed the same steps of faith which Abraham did—while he was uncircumcised. He is tackling the issue of circumcision in which many Jews mistakenly had misplaced their faith.

In referring to Abraham as ‘the father of circumcision’, Paul is talking about a SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION that takes place, which he has already described in previously in chapter 2.

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.....For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God”.—Rom. 2:25, 28-29

and which he reiterates in his letter to the Colossians:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.—Col. 2:11-17

This echoes the picture the prophet Joel gives us in Joel 2:12-13 where the LORD tells the people to “rend your heart and not your garments”. Refer also to Deut. 10:16; 30:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 44:7; Romans 9:4-8; 25-27 and 2 Corinthians 3:6.

So who gets the blessedness of having their lawless deeds forgiven? In this passage of scripture Paul is making two MAJOR points:

(1) Forgiveness of sin and salvation comes not through the Law but through the promise of the Messiah made to Abraham that from him would come a descendant through whom all the nations would be blessed—the LORD Jesus Christ. Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles benefit through the same grace that is offered.

(2) If the Law were the heirs of the promise of Messiah then it would make faith null and void and would make the promise to Abraham inconsequential.

But the Law does not make heirs of faith because the Law can only bring wrath and condemnation for sin [it cannot bring salvation] because it only defines exactly what sin is.

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Note that the conception of Ishmael occurs in Gen. 16:3-4 but the promise occurs in Gen. 15:4-5.
vv. 16-18 ➤ Salvation Also Comes through a Promise

[16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, 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, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.”]

Benefits Expounded

Paul is referring to the promise made to Abraham that he believed and the Lord declared him righteous for it [ref. Gen. 15:6]. This promise is recorded in Gen. 15:4-5:

Then He [the Lord] brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them”. And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be”.

He then quotes two more OT scriptures related to the faith of Abraham in the promises of God; Gen. 17:5 and Gen. 15:5.

And history does testify that even though Abraham was childless and he was 100 years old when he had Isaac [ref. Gen. 21:5], over the centuries his descendents indeed became as numerous as the stars visible in the Milky Way galaxy.

But now Paul extends the promise to the principle of salvation. Abraham’s faith in the Lord’s promise becomes the prototype for all those who come by faith and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It this point it is very important to recognize that in the context of the Lord blessing Abraham with a promise that he would have as many descendents as the visible stars in Heaven, there is another grander and more general promise. Note:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”—Gen. 12:1-3

Note especially that last verse; “…..in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”. That would include all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues—including the Gentiles! But how would they be blessed.

After Abraham was willing to offer his only child; Isaac [the child of promise], to the Lord for a sacrifice; the Lord reaffirms the promise he made to Abraham originally [which he believed and it was reckoned to him for righteousness]:

“By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendents as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendents shall possess the gate of their enemies.”—Gen. 22:16-17
This is the same promise that Abraham received before, which he believed and it was credited to him for righteousness. But in this same passage of scripture we learn ‘HOW’; or more specifically through ‘WHO’, all people will be blessed:

“In your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice”.—Gen. 22:18

The LORD was telling Abraham because of his great faithfulness one of his descendents, the ‘SEED’, was going to be the Messiah and he believed!

This is confirmed by Paul in letter to the churches in Galatia [modern Turkey] when he wrote:

Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them’. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds”, as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed”, who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.—Gal. 3:12-18

As Christians we are all beneficiaries of that promise—not through the legalism of a Law or the keeping of rules and ordinances, but through faith in the love and grace of Jesus Christ!

vv. 19-22 ➤ The Explanation of Abraham’s Faith

[19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness”.]

Belief is Expressed

Paul goes on to explain the depth of Abraham’s faith was based on that which is naturally impossible—having children way beyond the age of doing so. This was the basis for the LORD reckoning his faith for righteousness. Abraham was an old man when he received this promise—100 years old {Gen. 17:17}

This is why both Abraham’s and Sarah’s faith are described in the book of Hebrews “HALL OF FAITH”.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude-- innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.—Heb. 11:8-12
The phrase that Abraham’s body was ‘already dead’ meant that he could no longer produce children—he no longer had the ‘life’ in him to reproduce children. Also, the deadness of Sarah’s womb [she too was well beyond child-bearing age at 90 years of age] is a symbol of our ‘deadness in trespasses and sins’ {Eph. 2:1} which the LORD resurrects to a new life through faith in His promise to save us with the blood of Jesus Christ {Eph. 2:2-10}.

vv. 23-25 ➢ THE BLESSING OF THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

[23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.]

Blessedness is Extended

As mentioned before, Paul is holding up Abraham as a prototype of faith that leads to righteous—salvation and eternal life in this case. Those who place their faith in the promise, like Abraham did, will likewise receive the benefit of God’s forgiveness and righteousness.

This promise is based on God’s grace [just like the one made to Abraham] and it is the foundation of the Gospel. Paul summarizes it later in this letter:

“…..that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’. ”—Rom. 10:9-11

The promise is basically this: If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord [the Christ] and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead—you will be saved.

Obviously, there is no set of rules or regulations involved [e.g., the Law] and the only way a person can do this is through believing God—just as Abraham did! It takes faith to confess that Jesus is the Lord because it requires the admission that God is right and I am wrong about the fact that I am a sinner. It requires repentance and humility to get to that point and then the obedience to follow through. Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead requires pure faith.

Thus, it is the same grace working through faith in which the promise of eternal life is appropriated.