“Abraham’s Greatest Discovery”

February 4, 2018

Ephesians 2:1-8

Please open your Bible today to the 4th chapter of Romans.

One of the greatest gifts God has bestowed upon the human race is the ability to think things through to a conclusion based upon the facts. We call it investigating or finding out. And throughout history even up to this very moment, mankind is finding things out.

Take, for example, the absent-minded biologist Alexander Fleming. Here’s his story. Back in 1928 Mr. Fleming was studying a type of bacteria called staphylococci. Today you’d recognize it by the name staph infection. Well, absent-mind-ed Mr. Fleming somehow forgot to clean things up before he went on vacation and accidently left one of his culture dishes out on a table. When he returned home and to his laboratory, he noticed the dish had become contaminated with a greenish-bluish fungus, which he promptly threw away. He then noticed that the staph bacteria he had been working on would not grow now that it had no more fungus attached to it. So, he decided to study the fungus instead, which he did; for the next twelve years. And to his amazement, he discovered something inside the fungus which he called penicillin.

This is how Fleming presented it to the scientific community in 1945. *“It arose simply from a fortunate occurrence which happened when I was working on a purely academic bacteriological problem which had nothing to do with … antibiotics.”*

So, Sir Alexander Fleming has been credited with the discovery of penicillin. It’s been estimated that, since its discovery, penicillin has saved upwards to two hundred million lives.

Now, the pacemaker. The pacemaker was discovered by a man named Wilson Greatbatch; the first one implanted inside a human being in 1960. Greatbatch was an electrical engineer who messed up a circuit he was making for record-ing heart beats. Once the circuit was messed up, he found a way to use it to design a pacemaker. By the way, Greatbatch died at the age of ninety-two, just seven years ago, in 2011.

So, yes, some things are found by accident. But many, many things were discovered by careful observation and investigation; thinking and drawing conclusions from those observations.

Back in 1774 a chemist by the name of Joseph Priestley observed and subsequently discovered something that we find right here in this room. Priestley, by the way learned and studied the Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, French, Italian, and High Dutch. Priestley found that when he heated red mercuric acid (which today we use in mercury batteries), he noticed a colorless gas was present during the process. And it wasn’t long before he noticed that the colorless gas was highly combustible. So, he named it de-phlog-is-ti-cated air or air that could be burnt. And he also noticed that it was needed to keep animals alive. Today we call Priestley’s de-phlog-is-ti-cat-ed air by another name; oxygen. Priestly discovered it.

And what would we do without the discovery made by Isaac Newton called gravity? And the discovery of the electric lightbulb. And fingerprints? And anesthesia. And DNA. And liquid crystals for your flat screen television? And cell phones and Apple watches?

Now, from such discoveries, let me have you turn with me to the discovery made by Abraham, the Father of the Jewish nation. Abraham, is among those who made an amazing discovery? And it’s found right here in Romans chapter four.

Let’s read the first few verses of the chapter. See if you can locate Abraham’s discovery. Romans 4:1 *“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.”*

Here’s what is on my heart today. If you can see with me Abraham’s discovery, you too can discover the exact same thing he did. I’ve titled today’s message “Abraham’s Greatest Discovery.” Shall we pray?

I have just two words for you today; discover and justify. I’m going to ask you to focus with me, for the next few minutes, on just these two things. And if so, I know your heart will be affected. Most of you know that I’ve got a heart condition. Well, practically spiritually speaking, everyone here also has his own heart condition. And what I hope to do is to bring you before the Heavenly Heart Doctor and have Him do a heart checkup. So, there’s no doubt that when you see what Abraham discovered, your heart will deeply affected.

And where do I get that? Romans 2:29 *“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that* ***of the heart****, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”*

So, look with me today at these three words; discover, justify, and count.

First, discover.

Paul wrote this letter to the Roman Christians as a Doctor of the Law. You see, long before the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Roman Christians, he, a Jew, had been a Pharisee, and a teacher of Pharisees. And as a teacher of the law, Paul had mastered the OT Scriptures. So, every time Paul refers to a passage in the OT, you know he’s studied it well. And here in Romans Paul quotes or alludes to a passage in the OT no less than ninety times. You could go so far as to say that Romans is rooted in the Old Testament.

So Paul was very familiar with Bible characters, such as Abraham and David.

Now, what was it that Abraham found? Actually, two things; actually the two most important things ever discovered. What did he find? One, he found in his OT that no one can be justified before God by doing good works. Two, he found that you *could* be justified before God only when you exercise faith in the things that God says.

Look again with me at the Bible at verse two. Romans 4:2 *“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. (4) For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*

Abraham is known as the father of the Jewish nation. His grandson, Jacob, brought twelve boys into the world. And the descendants of those twelve boys are referred to in history as the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now, Abraham’s story is found in the first book of the Bible. And Abraham’s relationship with God is key to unlocking your relationship to God.

Now, why did I say that this is Abraham’s greatest discovery? Here’s why. Romans 4:1 *“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?”*

The words “hath found” mean this “has discovered.” The Greek term is ευρισκω (pronounced heurisko). And it means “to find out, to discover, to detect, or to find out by experience.”

Paul’s concern is always the truth. And his point here is simple. What did the Father of the Jewish nation discover regarding how a person enters into a right standing with God? How can anyone gain righteousness with God? So Paul goes to the one place that is and has always been the final court of appeals on any subject; the Bible.

Genesis is divided into two pieces. In the first section, we see God and the entire world. In the second section, we see God and Abraham and his descendants. So, there in the Genesis, the Book of Beginnings, Paul finds Abraham and, in essence, asks him, “Abraham, how is it that you became a friend of God?”

So, for us and for the Roman Christians, he quotes Genesis fifteen. Here it is. Genesis 15:1 *“After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (2) And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?*

*(3) And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. (4) And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, this shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

*(5) And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be. (6) And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Abraham is now seventy-five years old. Sarah, his wife is sixty-five. They have no children. And yet the LORD ha had promised Abraham in Genesis twelve that he would be the father of many nations. By the way, that’s what the name Abraham אברהם means; “father of a multitude.” Abraham is the first Jew. Abraham is the father of a multitude. But here in Genesis fifteen Abraham has yet to become a father.

And, by the way Abraham finds his way into the NT no less than sixty-nine times. Just two other people are mention-ed here more times than Abraham; Jesus and Moses.

So, without a doubt, when it came to Paul best illustrating how a person can be made right with God, there’s no one better than Abraham, the father of the Jews.

So, first, discover.

Second, justify. Please look again with me at Romans 4:1 *“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.”*

How can a person be justified before God? The natural way of looking at how a person is justified before God is “by works and effort and merit.” The word “justify” means “to make righteous.” And what is Paul saying as to how a person is justified before God. First, not by works. Second, only by faith. Here’s Romans 4:3 *“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*

Folks, justification before God is what Abraham found. And justification before God comes for any of us not by works which we do, but by believing what God says. As proof, Paul says, read Moses. Read Genesis 15:6. What does Moses say regarding the righteousness of Abraham?

Genesis 15:6 *“And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.”*

You see, folks, believing is not natural. What’s natural is *“I do good. God sees that I do good. And God justifies me.”*

And why? What’s wrong with good works as a basis for obtaining righteousness before God? Listen again to Paul. Romans 2:4 *“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.”*

Can you see the power of simple faith over the effort of doing good works when it comes to a right relationship with God? Yes, there is a place for good works; after salvation; after we’ve been justified before God. *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”*

Oswald Chambers put it this way. *“When I turn to God and by belief accept what God reveals, the miraculous atonement by the Cross of Christ instantly places me into a right relationship with God. And as a result of the supernatural miracle of God’s grace I stand justified …”*

[Found in “My Utmost For His Highest” October 28].

Folks, if you want to know for sure that you are righteous in God’s eyes, stop asking “God, what should I do?” And begin listening to God say “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, what can I do for you?”

And you will see that God so loved the world that He gave us His Son to die as our Substitute. You will see that Jesus paid the penalty you deserve for your sins. You will see that justification is what God does to and for a believing sinner. At the moment you believe on Christ, you are declared righteous. You no longer have to carry the burden of your sin. And you no longer have to carry the burden of “What do I have to do?”

God’s way is *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”*

Now, folks, to this very moment in history, there are many who are lost in their “good works” and “religious activities” and “I do good and God sees it and He rewards me with Heaven” thinking. You have family and friends who are there right now. And what do they need to hear from you? That God’s way to righteousness is not by works, but by simple faith.

Let me give you a modern day illustration. Here’s a modern-day Jew speaking about justification. His name is Mordechai Housman. He was born in 1962 and lives in Monsey, NY. “I live in a very Jewish village in New York State. I am Hassidic, a fifth-generation Karlin-Stolin Chosid by patrilineal descent, though my ancestors on both sides have been Chassidim of various types ever since the Bal Shem Tov's times. (The Bal Shem Tov, born in the year 1698, was the founder of modern Chassidus.)

I have studied in a number of yeshivos (full-time Jewish religious schools), and I have gained a diversely Orthodox background. I began in Yeshivah Toras Emes Kaminetz, which is a non-Hasidic Orthodox Yeshivah.

I studied at Yeshivah Emek Halachah, under the Torah Leader Rabbi Tuvia Goldstein; at Yeshivah Kaminetz in Jerusalem, under Rabbi Asher Lichtenstien; in the Mattesdorfer Kollel, under the Mattasdorfer Rov, Rabbi Toiseg; in Yeshivah Gedolah Merkaz Hatorah of Montreal, under Rav Motel Weinberg of blessed memory; and at Yeshivah Sh'or Yoshuv, under the acclaimed Rav Shlomoh Freifeld, of blessed memory.

I must stress that everything I say I try to base on what has been said before me, by my Rabbis, or in the books written by Gedolei Torah. Whenever I venture to suggest something of my own I will always clearly state that it is my own.

And every concept of my own I first discuss with my various Rabbis and other Torah scholars I know. I am very close with Rabbi Chaim Boruch Wolpin Shlita, a student of Rabbi Reuven Grodzofsky of blessed memory and of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelovitch of blessed memory.

Rabbi Wolpin is the Rosh Yeshivah (Head of the Yeshivah) of Yeshivah Karlin Stolin in Brooklyn, NY.”

Here’s what Mordechai Housman says about those who teach that you must accept Jesus or you will go to everlasting Hell. *“Judaism has always held that we do not need that sort of salvation, for we are not doomed or damned at birth. We are not doomed or fated to sin. Quite the contrary. The Torah says: “If you do good, won't there be special privilege? And if you do not do good, sin waits at the door.*

*It lusts after you, but you can dominate it.” (Genesis 4:7) In other words, you can do good, and if you do, things will be better for you. If you do not do good, sin wants to be partners with you. But you can control sin, you can control your evil desires, and you can be good.*

*If we can be good, that means we can be righteous. I cannot understand how or why Christians like to say that no one can be righteous in the eyes of G-d. The Torah says otherwise. …as long as we keep the Torah, we are righteous…In Judaism, it is entirely up to you. If you do good, you will get good.”* [Found on [www.beingjewish.com](http://www.beingjewish.com)].

So, folks, what did Abraham really find? What was it he discovered? What was his greatest discovery? He discovered that a man can become righteous by trusting in what God says and not by relying on his own good works.

The name Giovanni de' Medici might not be familiar to you. At the age of seven, Giovanni de’ Medici became a monk in the Roman Catholic Church. At thirteen he became a cardinal, and at forty he became pope and changed his name to Pope Leo X.

The pope that preceded Leo was a man named Julius II. Julius II raised and saved a lot of money for the Church. But nearly all of it was spent in the first eight years that Leo X served as pope.

And Leo X wanted to build the largest new Church in the world. It was the sixteenth century. But, because there was no money left to build this huge Church, he created what some call a fund raiser. He sold a reliable method of getting out of purgatory. You could purchase an indulgence from the Church and your loved one would possibly get out of purgatory. In other words, the Church sold forgiveness.

By the way, the Church he had built became the largest Church ever built until the 1990’s. It took 120 years to build; 163,000 square feet with the dome 450 feet high. It’s still to this day called St. Peter’s Basilica.

But, one of the monks in the town of Wittenberg, Germany had been teaching the Book of Romans and came upon the fact that forgiveness cannot be purchased either before death or after death. So, after carefully studying both Romans and Genesis, he posted a list of ninety-five com-plaints against the Church, including a complaint against indulgences on the Church door in the town. The monk’s name was Martin Luther.

And, because of Luther’s bravery in standing against the false teachings of the Church, a Protestant Reformation began.

What was it that Luther discovered? Please look with me at Romans 4:3 “*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.”*

Luther said that if the Bible says that forgiveness is free, then no one has the right to anything of anyone except to receive it.

Here’s how Luther put it. *“The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 3:24-25). He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (*[*John*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John)*1:29), and God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (*[*Isaiah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Isaiah)*53:6).*

*All have sinned and are justified freely, without their own works and merits, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood (Romans 3:23-25). This is necessary to believe. This cannot be otherwise acquired or grasped by any work, law, or merit.”* [Found on [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org) “Smalcald Articles.”

Folks, you too can discover what Abraham, Paul, and Martin Luther discovered; that righteousness is not of works, but by faith; faith in the finished work of Christ Who died in your place at Calvary. Have you found righteousness?

Now, you may be here today and, for the first time, realize what Jesus did for you at Calvary. Then, today, for you will be the Day of Salvation.

You are a sinner and you’ve come short of the Glory of God. And yet, at the moment you trust in Christ, God does for us something we could never do for ourselves. He grants you righteousness.

Today, if you will be made righteous, you need to acknowledge that your sin and put your faith in Christ alone. And when you do that, you will be saved.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Would you pray this prayer today? The Sinner’s Prayer. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Jesus said, Revelation 3:20 *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 339 “By His Grace”