

Romans 4:13-25 (NIV)

“How the Lord’s guarantee works”

“It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ⁽¹⁵⁾ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

“⁽¹⁶⁾ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

“⁽¹⁷⁾ As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

“⁽¹⁸⁾ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ ⁽¹⁹⁾ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

“⁽²⁰⁾ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ⁽²¹⁾ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ⁽²²⁾ This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness.’

“⁽²³⁾ The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, ⁽²⁴⁾ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ⁽²⁵⁾ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

How do you get God to accept you?

Our Romans text deals with that thorny issue.

You spend a lifetime on earth and do what you think is right.

What if you make too many mistakes?

What if you do really bad things?

What if you emphasized the wrong things?

When you prepared for tests in school, did you ever misjudge the kinds of questions the teacher or professor would ask?

A young college student stayed up all night studying for his zoology test the next day. As he entered the classroom, he saw ten stands with ten birds on them. Each bird had a sack over it so only the bird's legs showed. The student sat right on the front row because he wanted to do the best job possible. The professor announced that the test would be to look at each bird's legs and give the common name, habitat, genus, species, etc.

The student looked at the legs of each bird. All the legs looked the same to him. He began to get upset. He had stayed up all night studying and

now had to identify birds by their legs. The more he thought about it the madder he got. Finally, he could stand it no longer. He went up to the professor's desk and said, "What a stupid test! How could anyone tell the difference of birds by looking at their legs?" With that the student threw his test on the professor's desk and walked to the door.

The professor was surprised. The class was so big and he didn't know every student's name. As the student reached the door, the professor called, "Mister, what's your name!"

The enraged student pulled up his pant legs and said, "You guess, buddy! You guess!"¹

What if the heaven entry test resembles that?

**But you prepared the wrong way.
Or what if the Lord requires a grade of 70 and you attain only 69.9?**



¹ *The World's Greatest Collection of Clean Jokes*, Phillips, p - 82

Our text refers to a guarantee.

Do you know about that warranty?

If so, are you taking advantage of it?

Here are some sad facts.

- **Most people either don’t know about the guarantee.**
- **Or they’re trying to gain God’s acceptance the wrong way.**



Here’s what I mean.

In Paul’s day, as now, folks relied on one of two things to get God’s approval.

First, many depended on a family connection.

Those people felt God’s approval because of their ancestry connection with Abraham.

When I first dated Norma, she told me of a high school classmate who had an attitude because his dad was on the school board.

He evidently got away with things because of his dad’s name.

Some of Jesus’ contemporaries assumed the same thing. “Because Abraham is our grand

pappy, we deserve special privileges. We’re on the ‘fast-track’ to heaven.”

Recall how John the Baptist blasted that assumption—that they were heaven connected because Abraham was their granddad?

John reprimanded them. As one version reads:

“Don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as ‘father.’ Being a child of Abraham is neither here nor there—children of Abraham are a dime a dozen. God can make children from stones if he wants.”²

Few people claim exemptions now because of their Abraham link.

But I know guys who apparently think God will give them an “Okay” because they married a good woman.

Some think they’ll get a pass because they attend the right church.

Others hope to slide in with great preachers or virtuous parents.

² *The Message*, Eugene Peterson, Luke 3:8, 9

The Old Testament warned; even though three really righteous guys—Noah, Daniel, and Job—speak up for you (see Ezekiel 14).

Those three could save only themselves; none could bring anyone else with him.

That so-called saints can help you is a 16th century myth, concocted by church leaders trying to raise money.

We can’t slide in grabbing some “good” person’s shirttails.

Second, many people hope to win God’s approval by keeping numerous laws.

Some prominent church leaders teach that, too.

They tell you that if you’ll keep all their Laws, they’ll get you to heaven.

As you know, if laws could make anyone righteous, this nation would be perfect.

Add all the maritime laws, civil laws, criminal laws, business laws, and tax laws at national, state, county, and municipal levels, and we probably have more laws than we have citizens of this country.

Presidents have trouble appointing cabinet members because it’s hard to find people who haven’t violated some of the nation’s laws.

- **First, it’s hard to keep laws.**
- **Second, when ordinary folks see political and religious leaders breaking laws, they wonder why they should have to keep them.**

The Bible correctly states that human perversity and greed are at the heart of the issue, not laws.

If family connections and keeping laws can’t help us pass God’s entry test, is our situation hopeless?

No.

The Lord provides a guaranteed way—to gain His acceptance.

It involves the Abraham connection.

We must be Abraham’s children.

Are you thinking?

“Bob, you’re talking in circles,”



Don’t overlook this crucial point in gaining God’s approval.

This fact stands as one of the most important topics the Bible teaches.

We must be children of Abraham, but not his biological kids.

Using ancestry.com or having your DNA traced won’t help.

Here’s how the Abraham connection works:

Recall the amazing promise the Lord made to Abraham?

He promised him and his wife Sarah they’d have a son.

God told them that the son’s descendants would produce a great nation of people, who would possess their own country.

Years passed, Abraham and Sarah grew old, and still no kid.

When they became so old, they thought parenthood absolutely impossible, the Lord reaffirmed his promise of a son.³

³ You can read the full narrative in Genesis 12-18.

One starry night when the Lord made the promise anew, old Abraham believed God.

On the basis of that belief, the Lord said to him:

“Abraham, I know you are not perfect. You tend to fib from time to time and you haven’t been the greatest husband.

But because you believe what I’ve told you about Sarah having a son, I’m going to consider you as righteous and start treating you as if you were righteous. I intend to keep my promise to you and Sarah.”⁴

As our text reads:

“Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead.”



⁴ This is my paraphrase of God’s promise and its implications.

"Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness."

Here's great news about Abraham and his connection to us now:

"The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

- **Would you like to feel free of guilt?**
- **Do you believe in God?**
- **Do you believe that God sent His Son-his only Son to pay the cost of your wrongdoing?**
- **Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?**
- **Are you acting on that belief?**
- **Have you given your life to the Lord?**



Your belief in Christ, your public confession of Christ and your baptism into him brought you into God's family not any genetic connection.

Your faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God saves you, not because you've kept a bunch of laws.

No one can keep all the laws and demands.

When you believe God's promises in Christ and act on them, you become a spiritual descendant of Abraham, joining a brotherhood and sisterhood of fellow believers.

We earlier talked about God's guarantee?

Here's how it works. As Paul wrote later in Romans, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If God accepts you, no one can say that you lack God's approval, that you won't make it to heaven.

No power in the Universe can take heaven away from you; it's yours forever.

"Nothing can separate us from God's love."

Imagine being onboard a train bound for home.

No human can stop that train.

No one can derail, delay, stall, or destroy it.

The train travels an express track to heaven.

The world might stop but not the heaven-train.

It’s bound for heaven safely carrying all passengers aboard.



On the Lord’s train we’re subject to conditions.

When you buy any kind of ticket, whether it’s an airline ticket, train ticket, bus ticket, or even a ticket to Disneyworld, the back side always states: **Subject to Conditions.**

On airplanes, we must treat the crew well and no jokes about bombs or hijacking.

On the Lord’s train, He expects:

We trust the engineer, and we love everyone on board.

We treat the other passengers respectfully and purely.

Actually pretty simple.

We don’t have to memorize a bunch of laws or worry about family connections or bribing.

Most conditions can be summarized in a few short sentences.

- Love and trust God.
- Believe in Jesus, and publically confess him.
- Love one another.

The Lord doesn’t care how old you are when you decide to get onboard.

He doesn’t care who your parents were, whether you are tall, short, black, brown, yellow or white.

He doesn’t care how much or how little education you have.

Know this.

The Lord paid a terrible cost so you could enjoy your free ticket. I pray you’ll accept it and stay aboard. You’ll be happy through eternity.

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