

Romans 4:1-5  
(NKJV - clarity added)

- (1) What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?
- (2) For if Abraham was justified (*acquitted from the guilt of his sins*) by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
- (3) For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed (*trusted, relied on*) God, and it was accounted to him (*credited to his account*) for righteousness."
- (4) Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt (*something owed to him*).
- (5) But to him who does not work (*does not try to earn his salvation by works*) but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted (*credited*) for righteousness (*right standing with God*),

James 2:10 -- And the person who keeps every law of God but makes one little slip is just as guilty as the person who has broken every law there is. (TLB)

James 2:10 -- For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. (NKJV)

Romans 4:3 -- For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed (*trusted, relied on*) God, and it was accounted to him (*credited to his account*) for righteousness." (NKJV - clarity added)

## I. What is righteousness?

**Word Definition:** In simplest terms, to be righteous is to be right with God; to have right standing with God. Righteousness is the state of being right with God. My righteousness, or lack of it, establishes the kind of relationship that I have with God.

**Wisdom Point:** The difference between grace and works is illustrated by the question: "Is someone righteous because he does righteous things, or does he do righteous things because he is righteous?"

**Wisdom Point:** The way that you see and understand grace will ultimately affect the way that you see and relate to God. Even more, it affects the way that you see and relate to others. And, your understanding of grace is also significant in determining how you see yourself and how you relate to yourself when you stumble in one little point (James 2:10) or make a mistake.

## II. Did Abraham earn it?

Romans 4:2-4  
(NKJV - clarity and emphasis added)

- (2) For if Abraham was justified (*acquitted from the guilt of his sins*) by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

- (3) For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed (*trusted, relied on*) God, and it was accounted to him (*credited to his account*) for righteousness.”
- (4) Now to him who works, the wages are not *counted* as grace but as debt (*something owed to him*).

**Word Definition:** The word "counted" in Romans 4:4 comes from the Greek word *logizomai*. The word is used 27 times in his epistles and only four times in the rest of the New Testament. It means "to reckon, count, compute, calculate, or count over." It's an accounting word that means "keeping record of debits and credits." Significantly, it deals with reality rather than with supposition or opinion. For example, if I reckon that my bank account has \$25 in it, then it actually has \$25. It's not a matter of opinion or speculation. It's an actual accounting of what really exists.

**A. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved to do good works.**

Ephesians 2:10 -- For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV - emphasis added)

**B. Even our good works (righteous deeds) are nothing but filthy rags.**

Isaiah 64:6 -- We are all infected and impure with sin. *When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags*. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind. (NLT - emphasis added)

**C. God's solution to the deficit in our accounts:**

2 Corinthians 5:21 -- For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJV)

2 Corinthians 5:19 -- ...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, *not counting* people's sins against them. (NIV - emphasis added)

**D. Real saving faith is attended by good works (righteous deeds).**

James 2:23-24  
(NLT - emphasis added)

(23) And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God.

(24) So you see, *we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone*.

James 2:26 -- Just as the body is dead without breath, so also *faith is dead without good works*. (NLT - emphasis added)

**III. What did Abraham have to do?**

John 6:28-29  
(NKJV - emphasis added)

- (28) Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may *work the works* of God?”
- (29) Jesus answered and said to them, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.*”