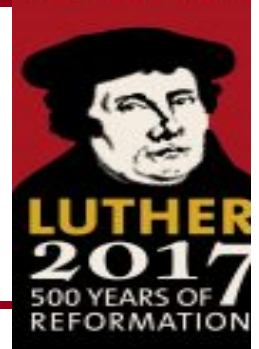


The Old Testament

Psalm 32 Romans 4:1-11,16 John 5:31-40

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Pastor Dave Bolte



There are 39 books in the Old Testament, written over a 1,500-year time period. The OT has 929 chapters and over 23,000 verses. The OT teaches us the early history of the world, and the formation of Israel as the people of God. Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David are the pillars of the Old Testament. Great stories like Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, and Daniel in the Lion's Den are found in the OT. The great salvation story of the OT is the Exodus story, where the Passover Lamb was sacrificed, the Israelites were rescued from slavery in Egypt, and Moses led them to the Promised Land after crossing through the Red Sea on dry ground.

The Old Testament is part of the holy, inspired, and inerrant Word of God. THE MOST IMPORTANT thing about the Old Testament is that it teaches us about the coming Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the World, who would suffer and die for all people.

The Old Testament is so important that St. Paul quotes it at least 57 times in the Book of Romans. **Paul teaches that Christianity is the fulfillment and continuation of God's plan of salvation from the Old Testament.** *Christianity is not a new sect or cult!*

Everything that God promised to do in the Old Testament, He did in the New Testament times. The Old Testament pointed forward to Jesus, the Messiah and the Christ, the One "anointed" with the Holy Spirit to be the Savior of the world.

In Romans chapter 4, St. Paul shows that salvation has always been by faith in Christ, and never by works, even in the Old Testament times. He uses Abraham, the Father of the Jews, as the perfect example.

**Although the Jews rejected Christ and taught salvation by works
Abraham, the Father of the Jews, believed in Christ
and was saved by faith, and not by works!**

God had made Abraham a promise that in his old age, Abraham would have a son, and his descendants would be like the stars in the sky! **God also promised Abraham a Savior, who would bless the entire world!** Abraham believed that promise! Here is how Paul teaches it:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? **“Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was CREDITED to him as righteousness.”** Romans 4:1-3

Abraham believed God’s promises. Salvation is by faith, and never by one’s own works or effort...in both the Old Testament and New Testament times! In order to illustrate that salvation is by faith alone, St. Paul highlights the word **“credit”**.

The word **“CREDIT”** is used 14 times in this one chapter of Romans 4. **It is a technical banking term that means to “reckon, count, and consider”**. It is a **word picture** where God **transfers** His gift of righteousness into your **“account”**--like **transferring** money into a bank account. Jesus’ perfect life and His sacrificial death, and all of their benefits, are **transferred into your account**. When God looks into your **“account”**, he does not see that you are bankrupt in sin and guilt, but rather He sees Christ’s perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross for you. He sees forgiveness, peace and life. You have been given the treasures of Heaven! This banking term highlights that it is all God’s work for us, and not anything that we do. **Salvation is by grace, through faith:** God **“credits”** you with righteousness, and all the gifts of salvation. Like **transferring** money into a bank account, God **transfers** the blessings of Christ into your **“account”** through faith. Just as Abraham believed God and it was **“credited”** to him as righteousness, so too, you believe God and it is **“credited”** to you as righteousness as well!

Another way to think about it is like this: Just as God has transferred and credited you with Christ’s **righteousness**, so too all of your **unrighteousness** has been **“transferred and credited”** out of your account and into Christ’s account --- and that is why He died on the cross. In other words, all of your unrighteousness went to Him and He dies; and all of His righteousness comes to you and you live.

In the Book of Romans, St. Paul teaches that just as God has **“credited”** Abraham with righteousness through faith; He does the same thing for you. By using Abraham as an example, Paul teaches us that salvation has always been by faith in Christ, in both Old Testament and New Testament times, and never the result of our own works or effort.

St. Paul also uses King David, another pillar of the Old Testament, as an example of the same thing.

DAVID says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose transgressions are **forgiven**, whose sins are **covered**. 8 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will **never count against them**.” Romans 4:6-7

This is a great way to think about forgiveness: **God will never “count” your sins against you!** Your sins have been “**counted against**” Christ on the cross so that they will never be “**counted**” against you! No wonder you are blessed! This blessing comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior God sent for you.

Be sure to apply this to yourself. When your sins pile up on you; and guilt is heavy in your heart,

- remember and believe that all of your sins have been **transferred** to Christ on the cross, and you have been **credited** with His righteousness through faith!
- Remember and believe that God does not **count** your sins against you. Your sins were transferred to Jesus and He died; and you are now forgiven and considered righteous in God’s eyes.

St. Paul is very careful to show that there is only one way of salvation for all people - -- Jew and Gentile alike --- from Adam and Eve to the last person ever born before Jesus returns on the Last Day. **SALVATION IS BY FAITH IN JESUS. There is no other way, in either the Old Testament times or the New Testament times.**

This is particularly important for us today. One of the biggest false teachings that has spread through Christianity is that “faith” is your good work that God will reward with salvation. Faith becomes something that you do: you make a decision, you accept Jesus into your heart, or you say a special prayer. Many false teachers claim that faith is your work; you are active in salvation. In other words: **If you don’t do your part, you are not saved.**

The Bible teaches that faith is a **gift** from God, that we are **passive** as God works to save us through Christ. **Holy Baptism, Holy Scripture, and Holy Communion are the ways God has chosen to work to create and strengthen your faith.** The banking term “credit” highlights that God is doing the work for us. Faith is passive, it is not considered our work, but God’s gift. **SALVATION IS BY FAITH IN JESUS. There is no other way, in neither the Old Testament times nor the New Testament times.**

Faith
Faith is a gift of God, that is, it is worked in a sinner by God alone through the means of grace, without any cooperation, effort, work, inclination, will, decision, movement, activity, or merit of man. It is not considered a good work, good works come afterwards and are pleasing to God because of faith. Cp. Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11.

Not only does Paul use the Old Testament to teach us about **righteousness by faith**, but he also uses the Old Testament to teach us about holy living in the Kingdom of God. Towards the end of the book of Romans, he writes this:

For everything that was written in the past **was written to teach us**, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. ROMANS 15:4

We study the Old Testament in order to be biblically literate, doctrinally sound, mission minded, and passionately engaged disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, we learn from the great people and stories recorded for us:

- † We learn about **obedience** from Noah
- † We learn about **faith** from Abraham
- † We learn about **tenacious trust** from Jacob
- † We learn about **integrity** from Joseph
- † We learn about **faithfulness** from Moses
- † We learn about **courage** from Joshua
- † We learn to **pray** like Hannah
- † We learn **patient endurance** in suffering from Job
- † We learn **boldness** from Elijah
- † We learn **loyalty** from Ruth
- † We learn to **worship** like David
- † We learn to **stand strong in the faith** from Daniel
- † We learn **holy zeal** from Ezra
- † We learn to **work hard in God's Kingdom** from Nehemiah
- † We learn to **confess Christ** from John the Baptist
- † We even learn from the **bad examples** in the Old Testament, from Adam, Eve, Samson, Jonah, Solomon, and the Israelites themselves.

Everything that was written in the Old Testament **was written to teach us**, so we study it, learn it, and learn from it how to live our lives today.

Two-thirds of your Bible is the Old Testament. It teaches us about Christ, the promised Savior of the world. It teaches us about faith as the only way to receive the blessings God. And, it teaches us how to live holy lives in the Kingdom of God.

May you value, appreciate and understand the Old Testament; so that you learn more and more about the Christian faith and life!

Amen!