

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(September 1, 2019)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

### **Amazing Grace, Indeed!**

(John's Gospel)

#### **Introduction: Matthew/Mark/Luke, JOHN...**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the four books in our Bibles that tell the stories of Jesus' life and ministry.<sup>1</sup>

The book written by the Apostle John is listed last in our New Testaments, and that's not because his is less - or more - important. It's fourth because it's, well, different.

Matthew and Mark and Luke each includes material from Jesus' life that is unique. They each give details about Jesus that the others don't include, and they each bring a perspective about Jesus that adds layers on to our understanding of Jesus and His mission.

But there are enough similarities and enough common material that we lump Matthew, Mark, and Luke together and call them "the synoptic" Gospels. They give us the life of Jesus through a common lens.

John's Gospel is the outlier. John didn't just write another record of Jesus' life. He wrote another kind of record of Jesus' life.

For instance, John includes zero parables and nothing like the Sermon on the Mount.

He includes several major speeches that Matthew, Mark, and Luke don't. He also tells about some miracles and events in Jesus' life that are omitted by the other three.

There is lots of overlap between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is very little between those three and John.

You might get confused or even skeptical when you first become aware of John's *otherness*. Your "Aha!" moment will come when you understand the unique purpose for which John wrote his Gospel.

As is the case with all great literature, each of the four Gospels was written with a purpose.

For instance, it's clear from the very beginning that Matthew's Gospel was written to give the story of Jesus to a Jewish audience, repeatedly showing Him to be the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Mark's purpose in writing was to present the story of Jesus as an encouragement to suffering Christians to faithfully follow a suffering servant-Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

Luke's intent was to inform his friend, Theophilus, precisely how the events of Jesus' life flowed, perhaps to correct other accounts that were floating around that weren't so accurate.

The Apostle John also wrote with a purpose, and he arranged the material he included to fulfill that purpose along two parallel lines.

One line shows us seven, increasingly spectacular miracles (he calls them "signs") that, taken together, give a full-orbed picture of an all-powerful Jesus. John tell us, "*Jesus is Lord. He is God in the flesh.*"

The other line shows us personal encounters between Jesus and groups or between Jesus and individuals.

---

<sup>1</sup> All are either eye-witness reports (Matthew and John) or written by friends of eyewitnesses (Mark and Luke).

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew starts with a very Jewish genealogy that presents Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Matthew quotes the Old Testament more than any of the other Gospels.

<sup>3</sup> Nearly one third of Mark's Gospel is given to Jesus' final passion. His book has been called "a passion story with a long introduction."

Each of these encounters gives us another piece in the puzzle as we try to discern John's reason for writing.

So, this morning is story time. We're going to hike through the beautiful stories John tells us about Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

As we watch Jesus interact with people like us, we'll see that it's all put together to make something worth celebrating, perfectly clear.

Like many good books do, John's book begins with an introduction. We'll start our hike there.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Story of Jesus, from John**

*...John the Baptist (1:7)*

John's Prologue is jam-packed with insight into Jesus' mission.

At the beginning (John 1:1), Jesus is called "**the Word**" (*logos*). He is the communication of God. The Apostle John says that this "**Word**" is eternal and is the Creator, both God and *with* God.

Then, still in the Prologue, John mentions someone other than Jesus. He mentions Jesus' slightly older cousin, John the Baptist.

The baptizer preached about Jesus *before* Jesus arrived. John baptized people in the dirty waters of the Jordan River to prepare them for Jesus.

And this is what John (the apostle) says about John (the baptizer).

**[1:7] He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might BELIEVE through him.**

---

<sup>4</sup> Don't be nervous about my covering the entire Gospel of John this morning. I once heard Dr. Charles Ryrie give a message from the book of Revelation - the whole book - in thirty minute's time.

<sup>5</sup> John's Prologue is one of the most significant theological texts in the New Testament.

The central point and purpose of John's ministry was to so present Jesus that those who heard about Jesus would *believe* in Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

THAT is where the story begins.

We move past eternity past and enter the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman world. John bursts on to the scene, pointing people to Jesus.

The story moves forward and Jesus begins collecting followers.

Two brothers, Andrew and Simon (Peter), had been following John the Baptist. After hearing Jesus, they left John to follow Jesus, which was, as far as John was concerned, "**Mission: Accomplished.**"<sup>7</sup>

Philip was the next to begin following Jesus. He told his friend, Nathanael, that he had found the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

Jesus quickly convinced Nathanael that He was who Philip said He was. Nathanael said, **[1:49] "Rabbi, You are the Son of God You are the King of Israel."**

Jesus identified Nathanael's confession as a confession of *faith*. (1:50) Nathanael *believed* in Jesus.

*...after turning water to wine (2:11)*

Not much time passed before Jesus and His disciples<sup>8</sup> were invited to a wedding in the village of Cana, in the land of Galilee.

While there, Jesus rescued the hosts from embarrassment by performing His first-ever public miracle. He turned a lot of water into a lot of really good wine at the wedding reception.

---

<sup>6</sup> The author inserts a parenthetical statement in vv. 9-12, explaining that Jesus would give the right to become children of God to everyone who "**received**" Him, equating "receiving Him" to "**[believing] in His name.**"

<sup>7</sup> John the Baptist was all about Jesus. The baptizer said, **[John 3:30] "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease."**

<sup>8</sup> We don't know how many He had by this time.

It was an impressive display of power over nature, but not many people present even knew what Jesus had done.<sup>9</sup>

But the disciples knew exactly what had happened. And here is John's commentary on the upshot of that miracle:

**[2:11] This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples BELIEVED in Him.**

There it is again. They *believed*. These disciples were already following. We know Nathanael had already believed. Watching Jesus perform an undeniable miracle brought more of the disciples to faith.

When the wedding feast concluded Jesus took His disciples with Him to Capernaum, His home base for ministry.

He stayed with His family (2:12) until it was time for the Passover. At that point, in early Spring, Jesus and His disciples went "up" (south, but "up" in elevation) to Jerusalem.

*...after cleansing the temple (2:23)*

While there, Jesus found God's temple to be an unholy mess.

People were buying and selling merchandise and animals. Money changers were exchanging foreign coins for "temple" currency.

The temple was to have been a place for prayer and worship. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day had let it turn into a flea market.

Jesus was angry. He made a whip out of cords and drove the buyers and the sellers all out of the temple. (This is what we refer to as His "*cleansing*" of the temple.)

His actions made quite the impact on the Jewish authorities - who were furious - and the disciples - who eventually "got" it<sup>10</sup> - and the crowds in the temple.

---

<sup>9</sup> John tells us that the headwaiter thought that the host had simply waited to bring out the best wine.

Specifically, after the cleansing and after Jesus had done and said other remarkable things, many of those in the crowd, **[2:23] BELIEVED in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.**

Again. The only remark John makes about the response of the crowds is that they saw and *believed* in Jesus.

*...at the end of a conversation with Nicodemus (3:14-16)*

The next event John mentions, which evidently took place in a Galilean village, is a night-time conversation Jesus had with a renowned Jewish rabbi, Nicodemus.<sup>11</sup>

Nicodemus understood that Jesus was something special. He told Jesus, **[3:2] "no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."** He was intrigued by Jesus' teachings.

But Jesus confused Nicodemus by telling him that he needed to be "*born again*" (3:3,7). He then made a reference to a story from the Old Testament to drive home His point.

The story comes from the time when the Jews were wandering around in the Sinai wilderness. They had recently rebelled against God, and, to discipline them, God sent poisonous snakes into the camp.

To stop this terrible plague, God told Moses to place a cast bronze serpent up on a pole and then promised that whoever looked at the serpent would be healed of their fatal snakebite.

Then Jesus, looking ahead to His own death on the cross, said to Nicodemus,

**[3:14] "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; [15] so that whoever BELIEVES will in Him have eternal life.**

---

<sup>10</sup> They did later, though. See 2:22.

<sup>11</sup> Most Bible scholars believe that Nicodemus chose the dark of night for this meeting because he didn't want to be seen associating with Jesus.

It was a believing “look” that physically saved the snake-bit Old Testament Jew.

Jesus said that after He is nailed and lifted up on a cross, whoever believingly looks at Him will be eternally saved from the penalty of sin.

Again, the point is *faith in Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Trust in Jesus.*<sup>12</sup>

After Jesus and Nicodemus finished their talk, Jesus left with His disciples, traveling south into Judea. There, they spent time baptizing people who were interested in following Jesus.

But, when Jesus found out that the Pharisees knew that He was making more disciples and baptizing more people than John the Baptist was, He knew it was time to head back north to Galilee.

However, rather than take the normal route around Samaria to get to Galilee, John says that Jesus **[4:4] had to pass through Samaria.**

We quickly discover why He **“had to”** pass through Samaria.

*...after a conversation with a Samaritan woman (4:39-41)*

Jesus met a woman at a well near the village of Sychar. Her life was a mess, and the Lord engaged her in a spirited discussion.<sup>13</sup>

He asked her draw water for Him and then told her that He could give her “living water” - referring to spiritual life - if she would just ask Him for it.

She misunderstood, so He shifted the topic to her domestic life.

He noted that she had been married five times and was currently living with a man to whom she wasn’t married.

---

<sup>12</sup> There is one Greek noun that we translate “faith, belief” (*pistis*) and one related verb for “have faith, believe, trust” (*pisteuw*).

<sup>13</sup> Jesus broke protocol by having this discussion, since a Jewish man would have never spoken in public with a Samaritan woman - especially *this* woman.

She - deflecting - exclaimed, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet!”. He told her that He was more than a prophet, that He was the Messiah of Israel.

At that point, the conversation ends, and the woman left Jesus to go into the village and to tell the men about the remarkable Man she had met at the well.

Here’s how John wraps up the story.

***[John 4:39] From that city many of the Samaritans BELIEVED in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.”***

Evidently, the woman believed. I say that because she gave a very believable report about Jesus to the men of the village.

And the only report John records of the response of the men is that they *believed*, first on the basis of the woman’s testimony, then on the basis of their first-hand exposure to Jesus.

Things are getting exciting. More and more people are believing in Jesus - even in Samaria!

More believed in Galilee, too, when Jesus left Samaria to go back to Cana (where He turned water into wine) to find a situation of great need.

*...after healing the son of a nobleman (4:53)*

In Cana, he was visited by a nobleman from nearby Capernaum who had heard that Jesus was there and that He had power to heal.

This man came to ask Jesus to return with him to Capernaum to heal his son, who was at the point of death.

Jesus refused to travel with the man to Capernaum. But it wasn’t like He didn’t care. He looked at the distraught father and said, **[4:50] “Go; your son lives.”**

John tells us that the man **“believed”** Jesus’ word and left for home. When he arrived, his slaves met him and told him that his son was doing just fine.

The father pieced together the timing and figured out that his son had started to get well at exactly the time when Jesus said, **“Your son lives”**, and **[53] he himself believed and his whole household.**

We’re walking through the stories of Jesus and find that, again, they *believed*. Again, a faith response.

That happened in Galilee. But Jesus didn’t stay there long. He moved back south again to Jerusalem and healed a man who had been lame for thirty-eight years. He told the man to pick up his pallet and walk - and the man did!

Unfortunately, this miracle offended the religious elites, who were more upset that He had “worked” on the Sabbath day than they were excited that a lame man walked.

And, after some harsh words back and forth, Jesus went traveling again. He and His disciples ended up at the Sea of Galilee, with huge crowds following.

*...in the middle of the Bread of Life Discourse (6:29)*

As the people flocked to Him, He healed the sick among them. Late in the day, Jesus turned to Philip and asked where they were going to get food to feed so many.

Philip didn’t have a clue, so Jesus told the disciples seat the crowds of thousands. He took a boy’s lunch of five barley loaves and a couple of small fish. He gave thanks to God and started distributing the food to the people until everybody had their fill. The disciples even took up twelve baskets filled with leftovers!

After the feeding of the five thousand, the crowds stayed with Jesus, pestering Him to do more miracles. Jesus told them to stop seeking signs and food, but to **“work”** (interesting word choice) for the food that endures to eternal life.

When the crowds asked what sort of **“work”** Jesus was talking about, He said, **[6:28]...“This is the work of God, that you BELIEVE in Him whom He has sent.”**

The **“work”** God was interested in seeing them do was the “non-work” of simply *believing* in Jesus, the One whom God had sent.

The next scene we see, Jesus is back south in Jerusalem at a Jewish festival called Tabernacles (or, the Feast of Booths).

*...at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37-38)*

Tabernacles was a seven-days-long festival. Throughout the seven days, the religious leaders were after Jesus, hounding Him for having healed that lame man on the Sabbath the last time He had been in Jerusalem.

Finally, on the last day, the seventh and greatest day of the feast, Jesus broke free from the rulers and spoke.

**[7:37]...Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [38] “He who BELIEVES in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”**

When Jesus has everybody’s attention and He’s on center stage, this is what He emphasizes. **“He who believes in Me...”**

What was crucial was that they *trust* in Jesus. *Believe* in Jesus.

The next major event John recounts in his telling of Jesus’ story is of Jesus giving sight to a man who had been born blind.

This is the next to the last of Jesus’ miracles we read about in John’s Gospel.

*...after giving sight to a blind man (9:35-37)*

We don’t know where this miracle happened or even what time of year. We do know that Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath.

Jesus and His disciples saw this blind man seated, begging, as they walked by. The Lord chose to do what we would expect the Light of the world to do. He gave "light" to this blind man.

**[9:6]...He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to [the blind man's] eyes, [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.**

It was a fantastic miracle. Nobody had ever done this: giving sight to someone born blind. It should have been a day of rejoicing and celebrating.

But, because Jesus performed the miracle, again, on the Sabbath day, the rulers were, again, upset. The rest of the day was spent in conflict.

The rulers of the Jews said that Jesus must not be from God, because no godly man would have "worked" on the Sabbath.

They tried to trap the formerly blind man's parents into denying that their son had been blind. They even accused the formerly blind man of lying about his having been blind.

And when he - the one who can now see!! - got sassy with the rulers, they removed him from life in the Jewish community.

Then we read this.

**[8:35] Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you BELIEVE in the Son of Man?" [36] He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may BELIEVE in Him?" [37] Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." [38] And he said, "Lord, I BELIEVE." And he worshiped Him.**

Jesus' only question of the man who could now see, who had just been thrown under the bus by his parents and who had been excommunicated by the Jews, was, "Do you believe in Me?"

That's the thing. It's the essential question. It's the only question Jesus thought was relevant to ask this man whose life had just been turned upside down. "Do you believe in Me?"

John keeps the story going and we come to His final miracle. We didn't know much about the setting for His miracle of sight-giving. We know exactly when and where this last miracle took place.

*...before raising Lazarus from the dead (11:25-27)*

It was very close to Jesus' own death when He got word that His good friend, Lazarus, was very sick.

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in Bethany, a small village just a couple of miles away from Jerusalem. At the time of Lazarus' sickness, Jesus was a day or two's journey from Bethany.

So, He got the message that Lazarus was sick. And then, rather than quickly get to Bethany to be with Him - and to heal him - Jesus chose to stay two days longer where He was.

Spoiler alert.

He stayed because He intended, not to heal Lazarus, but to raise Lazarus from the dead. His delay in going to Bethany ensured that Lazarus would be dead by the time He arrived.

And, sure enough, this story ends with Jesus standing outside the cave-tomb in which Lazarus had been buried four or five days earlier, crying out with a loud voice, **[11:43] "Lazarus, come forth!"**

This raising of Lazarus from the dead was the capstone of His miracles, proving that He truly was the Son of God.

But I want us to back up to a scene prior to the raising of Lazarus to see a "capstone" conversation between Jesus and Lazarus' sister, Martha.

Before He got to the tomb to perform the miracle, Martha had commented to Jesus, **[21] “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”**

She knew that Jesus had the power to heal. If He had arrived while Lazarus was sick, He could have made her brother well.

But Martha adds, **[22] “Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give you.”**

In other words, she knew that with Jesus present, even this situation wasn't hopeless.

She knew that the situation wasn't hopeless because of what she knew about Jesus. Listen to the interaction between Jesus and Martha.

**[11:25] Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who BELIEVES in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and BELIEVES in Me will never die. Do you BELIEVE this?” [27] She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have BELIEVED that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”**

As we have seen repeatedly this morning, the critical thing is to believe in Jesus, Martha passed the test. She **“has believed”** that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God.

And the story wouldn't have been complete without John pointing out at the end of the story that the miracle had its intended effect.

**[11:45] Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, BELIEVED in Him.**

Following this “grand finale” of a miracle, John keeps the story going and brings us to an upstairs room in a Jerusalem home on the last night of His life where He took a Passover meal with His disciples.

Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He watched as Judas Iscariot walked out in the middle of the meal to arrange for Jesus' betrayal.

Jesus spoke through the evening, preparing the eleven remaining disciples for life was after He was gone. He promised them persecution and He promised them the presence of the Spirit.

By the end of this time with the disciples, they have moved from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane

There, Jesus was handed over to Roman and Jewish soldiers. He was taken away for trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin and then before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

Convicted of blasphemy by the Jews and treason by the Romans, He was scourged, led to the place of crucifixion and nailed to a cross where He died between two thieves after His final words, **[19:30] “It is finished.”**

He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea late on a Friday afternoon - and John tells us nothing about what happened on that Saturday.

We do, though, read about the action at the tomb on the Sunday morning after, when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.

*...after the resurrection, at the tomb (20:8)*

Mary went to Joseph's tomb to grieve. But, upon arrival, found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb.

She ran to find Simon Peter and John and told them, **[20:2] “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”**

Peter and John ran to the tomb. They saw that the stone was rolled away, just like Mary had said.

Peter got to the tomb second, after John. But it was Peter who stepped into the tomb first.

He recognized that the body of Jesus was gone - but not as if by grave-robbing. The inside of the tomb was neat and orderly.

Then, we read the, by now, expected punchline.

***[20:8] So the other disciple (John) who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.<sup>14</sup>***

### **Conclusion:**

I mentioned at the beginning today that the purposes for which Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their books were clear from internal evidence.

The internal evidence we have seen from John just now lays out a pretty clear case that he was not only storytelling. He, too, was telling stories with a point, for a purpose.

And if the internal evidence hasn't been clear enough, near the end of his book, John doesn't leave us guessing. He gives us his purpose statement.

***[John 20:30] Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [31] but these have been written so that you may BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that BELIEVING you may have life in His name.<sup>15</sup>***

---

<sup>14</sup> These that we have seen today are just a few of the examples from John's Gospel of the centrality of simple faith in Jesus for eternal life. Check out these explicit invitations to believe in Jesus: John 1:12-13, 3:18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 10:37-38, and, of course John 3:16. Plus, there are more than twenty-five more passages in John's book where trust in Jesus is highlighted as EXACTLY what was called for, EXACTLY what God was looking for. See 1:47-51; 5:37-38; 5:44-47; 6:63-64; 6:66-69; 7:3-5; 7:30-31; 8:23-24; 8:28-30; 10:25-26; 10:40-42; 11:11-15; 11:40; 12:9-11; 12:35-36; 12:37-46; 13:19; 14:1, 10-12; 14:29; 16:8-11; 16:23-28; 16:29-30; 17:20-21; 19:31-35; 20:24-25; 20:26-29.

<sup>15</sup> By way of contrast, John's first letter (1 John) was explicitly written so that those who had believed in Jesus would **know** that they had eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

John wrote what he wrote to give everyone who read what he wrote the definitive guide to obtaining eternal life.<sup>16</sup>

I'm not saying by this that the other Gospels aren't suitable for evangelism and I'm sure not saying that God can't use any portion of His Word to bring people to Himself.

I am saying that while God can and does use truth from all parts of the Bible to lead people to eternal life, John's Gospel is uniquely written to do this.

It's the only one of the four accounts we have where the overt, stated purpose is to lead people to embrace Jesus as the Son of God so that they would believe in Him and would thus have eternal life.

Given that, we would expect that John would be very careful to be very clear about what is involved in obtaining eternal life. And we'd be right. He is very careful, and he is very clear.

You must believe in Jesus to have eternal life. If you don't believe in Jesus, you don't have eternal life.

And, there is nothing else that you must do to have eternal life. If there is, John's attempt to tell us how to have eternal life is a colossal failure.

Here's the best news you or your family or your friends will ever hear -

***[3:16] "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."***

---

<sup>16</sup> What we mean when we talk about going to heaven when we die, being saved, having our sins forgiven, being justified before God, getting right with God.

**Appendix:** The two justification of Abraham

\*\*\*Abraham's justification by faith (Romans 4) and Abraham's justification by works (James 2)

In Romans 4, the Apostle Paul explains how people are eternally saved. He picks up the Abraham story and writes - **[20] yet, with respect to the promise of God, [Abraham] did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, [21] and being fully assured that what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform. [22] Therefore, IT** (his faith in the promise of God) **WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Paul sees Genesis 15 as significant because it records the point at which Abraham was justified before God by faith alone. However, if we back up a few verses, we find this from Paul.

**[Romans 4:2] For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

We are justified before God by faith. Works don't send anyone to Heaven. But Paul can picture a justification by works. So can James. And what I (and many others) suggest is that Abraham experienced two different justifications.

The *first* one was by faith, before God, and resulted in his eternal salvation (Genesis 15; Romans 4). The *second* was by works and was before men.

The result of that second "justification" was that Abraham was known as **"the friend of God."** (See Is. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23). Jews, Muslims, and Christians call Abraham **"the friend of God."**

So, what did James mean when he linked Genesis 22 (the sacrifice of Isaac) to Abraham's justification?

**[James 2:21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?**

It was widely accepted in Jewish circles that Abraham was justified before God by faith. Here, James adds a twist when he says that

Abraham was justified by works. Not "faith + works" or by a working faith. Justified by works.

So... unless we are prepared to pit James against Paul and Jesus (see John 3:16!), we'll have to admit that James must be talking about a different kind of justification than Paul was.

James says, **[24] You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.**<sup>17</sup>

In other words, a "by faith" justification is not the only kind of justification there is. There is also a "by works" justification.

Had Abraham not obeyed God on Mount Moriah, he would still have been justified by faith, and would have been Heaven-bound, because he believed the promise of God (Genesis 15). But, because his faith was alive and active, he was also justified by works, (i.e. - seen to be a friend of God) before a watching world.

In the same way, when you are place your faith in Jesus, God justifies you and gives you eternal life (Romans 4:6). But that is a spiritual transaction only God can see.

When you, a person of faith, lead a life of obedience, faithfulness, and sacrificial love, you are showing an intimacy with God that others can see.

They will see that you are *"a friend of God"* in the same spirit in which Jesus said to His apostles on the night before He died, **[John 15:14] "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."**

And that is the benefit of "works." You, someone who knows God, becomes someone who makes God known.

---

<sup>17</sup> The late Zane Hodges was an excellent Greek grammarian, and he pointed out that the Greek adverb *"alone"* or *"only"* does not modify the noun *"faith."* It modifies the verb *"justified."*