

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Romans 4.

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter – that Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, and us, about the fundamentals of Christianity.

What is the Gospel of grace?

And that is exactly what the book of Romans is –

The Gospel of Grace

The Good News of Grace

And it is referred to the Gospel of Grace because of the theme of grace comes up over and over again.

Paul wants to make sure that we truly grasp this one fundamental.

That God loves us right now.

He loves us whether we had a good week or a bad week.

For those of us who may have had a bad week –

and we think God loves us less – the truth is - He doesn't.

For those of us who had a good week and think that God loves us a little bit more – the truth is - He doesn't.

He supremely loves us apart from our works and our deeds.

Some of us may have come from a religious environment where works and deeds were constantly emphasized.

Where we were taught that it was work, work, work and when we were done with work – we had to do a little more work to please God.

But Paul wants us to make sure that we understand that it is faith that pleases God and it is faith that develops works.

Everything we do is a response to grace – by faith.

So like Psalm 100:2 states

We (in response to grace)

[Psa 100:2 NKJV] 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

In our text this morning – Paul is going to use Abraham and his response to grace, by faith – to show us that salvation is grace through faith.

And how God simply wants us to trust Him – because as we will see - that is what Abraham did.

Let's pray...

Read text –

Over the past couple of weeks –

Paul, in his letter, has been describing the righteousness a person needs to be accepted by God.

And so Paul pointed out in chapter three

That apart from Christ – “There is none righteous, no, not one”

That apart from Christ – “because we have all sinned, we all fall short of the glory of God”

We all have missed the mark

We all fail to meet God's standard for righteousness – which is perfection.

So righteousness – is something that has to come from Him and not us.

It is by faith in Jesus Christ – not by keeping the law.

And now – Paul begins chapter 4 – by giving us a human example.

And human examples are always good –

That is why the Old Testament has been given to us – to show us that God uses ordinary people like Abraham.

Keep in mind that when Paul wrote the letter, many of the new believers were Jews – And the thing about Abraham is that that Jews considered him to be the epitome of righteousness.

After all, he was the very first Jew and a man that the scriptures call “the friend of God”

So, in the mind of the Jew, Abraham, exemplified goodness – and he exemplified what it took to be declared righteous.

In fact, many of the Jews believed that Abraham was perfect in all his ways.

In some of the Jewish writings –

The Mishnah – a collection of Jewish oral traditions, said of Abraham, that it was on the basis of his perfection that God declared him righteous.

The book of Jubilees says that Abraham was so righteous, he never sinned.

He never made a mistake.

But for those who have read Genesis – we know that Abraham was far from perfect.

And even if we didn't have the Genesis account – all we would have to do to know that Abraham was not perfect is to ask Sarah,

“Sarah, was Abraham perfect?”

And I am pretty sure she would laugh. “Yeah right”

Because he wasn't.

But the thing is church – that traditions are hard to break.

Especially religious traditions –

They can blind us to the truth.

And the attitude is –

This is what we believe.

This is what we have always believed.

This is what the church has taught us.

And what tradition does – it puts a layer over our eyes – so that we can no longer read the scriptures for what they say but instead,

we read the scriptures and begin to interpret them through the lens of traditions.

And then people will say something like – I don't care what the scriptures says, this is what I believe.

So the tradition of that day was that Abraham was perfect – that he was righteous because of his good works.

But Paul is going to provide them and us – how Abraham was truly justified.

So Paul – in verse 1

[Rom 4:1-8 NKJV] 1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

As Paul is presenting his case to the people –

He puts Abraham on the stand

And the question that Paul asks the people regarding Abraham is the following –

Is Abraham an example of someone who worked his way to heaven or was he justified by faith – was he saved by grace?

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

Righteousness gained by works lays a foundation for pride and boasting.

If I can get to heaven by what I do, then be assured – when I get to heaven - I'm going to tell others what a righteous person I was,

I am going to boast about what I did that merited God's favor.

I am going to boast about what a wonderful person I was.

I did this and I did that and so forth.

And if that was the case – guess what?

I wouldn't be the only one boasting –

Everyone else would be doing the same thing

We would be boasting to one another.

Eternity would be a boasting session.

Of course – we would only be boasting to each other

Never to God, because His perfection would always outshine ours.

[Eph 2:8-9 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Never in the scriptures do we find mention of how Abraham boasted of how he attained God's favor by his own goodness.

Rather, the record is very clear . . .

3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Notice that Paul is again basing his theology on the Scriptures, not on what he thinks.

It doesn't really matter what he says – what matters is what the bible has to say.

And far too many times - people base their ideas about God on what they think God should be like, not what God has told us He is like.

Or they base their ideas about Jesus and salvation on what they think and not what the bible says.

So it is important to ask ourselves "what does the scriptures say?"

Can the scriptures be trusted?

Jesus did and we should follow His example.

Turn to Genesis 15 –

[Gen 15:1-6 NKJV] 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I [am] your shield, your exceedingly great reward." 2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house [is] Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" 4 And behold, the word of the LORD [came] to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

God makes Abram a promise and Abram believes God.

What was the promise?

That God would be Abram's reward and that God would give Abram a son.

God told him to look up at the sky –

“Can you count all those stars Abram?? Your descendants are going to be that many”

And Abram lifted his head – and at that moment, the reality of God's promise became so real that he placed his implicit trust in God to fulfill His word.

And when God saw Abraham's faith, he reckoned Abraham righteous.

When Abraham turned from looking at his own inability and looked to God's sufficiency to keep His promise – it was at that moment that God declared that he was righteous

In other words, faith was the condition of being right before God

Abram could not be righteous before God by keeping the law because the law didn't even exist.

Abraham believed God, and it was **accounted to him** for righteousness.

I had you make a note of the phrase accounted to him.

The Greek word that Paul uses is the word “legizomai” *leg-is-o-may-i*

40 times we find it in the scriptures – 19 time in the book of Romans and 11 times we find it here in the Chapter 4.

We are going to see the word 5 times in our text – vs 3,4,5,6,8

It is a bookkeeping term

It means – to place in deposit / to credit the account.

We have a debt of sin owed to God.

We are incapable of paying that debt -

But God - when we believe in Christ, not only does God account our debt as paid in full, He also adds a credit to our balance.

How much does God credit our account?

He credits us with the unsearchable riches of grace in Christ Jesus

4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly (put your name right there), his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Every two weeks, my employer deposits a sum of money into my bank account –

The reason that my employer deposits those funds is not because they are a bunch of nice people – they deposit those funds because they are paying off a debt they owe to me.

When I got hired – they said, come to work for us and we will pay you this amount per hour.

Now – what Paul is saying here is that when God accounted Abraham righteous, it was an act of grace –

God did not “pay” Abraham for work performed.

If righteous is obtained by works, then because Abraham had worked righteousness, God would have been obliged to declare him righteous.

But that is not the way we are made righteous.

righteousness comes by faith

it is the gift of God, received only by those who look beyond themselves to God.

The saved person disavows any personal merit or goodness

The saved person renounces any possibility of earning salvation

The saved person admits that the sum and substance of every good work can never fulfill God’s righteous demands.

To him who does not work but believes on Him – this is the person who believes that God justifies by faith.

This is the person who has complete confidence in the work of Jesus – I had you make a note of the phrase believes on Him

That is what faith is correct?

Believing what God says simply because it is God who says it.

The belief is solely on Him and His redemptive work.

Cults require belief and works.

Catholicism requires belief and merit.

But the gospel of grace only requires faith.

Someone might walk in here and say – that is too easy.

But here is the truth – nothing is harder than to admit that we have nothing to offer God

Nothing is harder than to admit that we have nothing to give God

We have nothing that would make us appealing to God

God alone is the One who makes us righteous

Now -

If salvation were of works, then it would be a wage due those who work.

Therefore, God would become a debtor to man –

And here is the point that many seem to overlook -

God would be robbed of glory

The genius of grace is that it glorifies God who gives, not man who works.

I want you to think about this.

What is the primary purpose of the gospel?

Most would say it is to save men and women from sin, but that's not quite right.

Salvation is the means of the gospel, not the purpose.

To find out what the purpose of the gospel is, we need to ask what the primary purpose of man is.

Man's purpose is to glorify God

therefore, the primary purpose of the gospel is to glorify God

this is why salvation must be by grace through faith alone apart from works.

So if we are a person who has come to the conclusion that we are unable to be a godly person and we are unable to live a righteous life on our own, and we come to the conclusion that we are going to trust and count on God to make us righteous – that kind of faith is what allows God to enter “righteous” in your bank account in heaven.

6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: **7 "Blessed [are those] whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed [is the] man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."**

If Abraham was the most honored person in the history of the Jews – David was the favorite.

So Paul asks the question – was David saved by works or was he saved by faith.

And notice that Paul begins to link David and Abraham

In the same way that it happened to Abraham – it happened to David – the man after God's own heart.

Turn to Psalm 32 –

Because Paul is quoting from one of the Davidic Psalms here -

[Psa 32:1-2 NKJV] 1 [A Psalm] of David. A Contemplation. Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [Whose] sin [is] covered. 2 Blessed [is] the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit [there is] no deceit.

Now – the reason that Paul uses Psalm 32 is that David as the Holy Spirit has moved him to write this letter.

David is writing it after experiencing God's forgiveness.

He knew what it was like to be a guilty sinner.

He knew the seriousness of sin.

He knew – especially after being confronted by Nathan – after committing adultery with Bathsheba and conspiring to have her husband killed to cover up his sin –

David knew he had violated God's law

He knew he had failed to honor God

He knew he had failed to love God with all of his heart and failed to love his neighbor as himself

He had coveted his neighbors wife

He had committed adultery

He had committed murder

The Old Testament sacrifices made no provisions for such blatant premeditated sin.

You know what Paul is arguing –

That David case is hopeless –

But David killed Goliath when he was younger – doesn't that account for anything

He wrote a lot of the Psalms – doesn't that account for anything?

He defeated the Philistines – doesn't that account for anything?

How many Goliaths would David have to kill in order to make his sin go away?????

How many good things would we have to do in order to make our sin go away???

You see – what Paul is doing is showing us how David’s situation was hopeless – and at the same time show you and me how our situation – apart from Christ is hopeless.

But David is Psalm 32

He experiences forgiveness.

He knew what it is was to truly be forgiven by God

But here is the thing –

When one reads Psalm 32 – we never read of any works that David did in order to receive God’s forgiveness.

David simply acknowledged his guilt and he cast himself on the mercy of God

Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven

Question – when David writes this – do you think he is referring to himself? Yes!!!

Where does he get off saying this –

He’s a murderer and an adulterer.

Yet it was true.

It wasn’t because of all the giants he killed or the psalms he wrote.

It was because God in His grace and His mercy – forgave him.

David was made righteous because of his faith, not his works.

Believing what God says simply because it is God who says it.

In John's gospel – we had Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night.

[Jhn 3:15-17 NKJV] 15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Again - Believing what God says simply because it is God who says it.

It all seems so easy –

But the opposite is true – to abandon the wicked though that we can do anything that will contribute to our salvation

And that is what God tell us over and over again – and then to trust Him and believe Him.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Santa Cruz

Paul used Abraham and David in our text today – but it is important to understand that he could have easily used Joseph, Isaac, Jacob or Daniel or any of the OT saints

All of them had to come to a point in their life where they would believe the promises of God simply because He said it.

And He has made the same promise to you and me,

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

