

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 the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Rome and to us today – about the fundamentals of Christianity.

A letter in which Paul methodically explains to us how we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone –

And not of works – so that we should boast.

This is the biblical concept of justification.

How are we made right before God?

And because of Jesus' work on the cross and the resurrection – we are clothed in His righteousness and not our own –

so those who put their faith and trust in Him are found righteous in His eyes.

We are accepted.

And so - we spent last Sunday looking at the first eight verses of this chapter – where Paul tells us exactly that.

That we are justified by faith.

We saw how Paul used two giants of the Jewish faith –

Abraham and David –

And Paul used these two individuals to demonstrate to us that justification has always been by grace through faith.

God accounted Abraham righteous – on the basis that Abraham believed God's promise simply because God said it.

[Gen 15:6 NKJV] 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

It was not because of Abraham's works or his deeds or his sacrifices – it was because he believed.

Same thing with David –

David as he wrote Psalm 32 – he was able to truly experience being forgiven of his sins –

he was a murderer and an adulterer – he deserved death.

There was no sacrifice that David according to the Law that David could have offered that would have covered his sin.

There weren't enough good deeds that David could have done in order to be justified.

But God!!!

But God in His grace and His mercy – forgave David because David trusted God's promises.

Despite of him being a murderer and despite of him being an adulterer – there is a path of forgiveness.

So, the first 8 verses of the chapter deal with how we are made righteous – it deals with that path.

By faith!!!!

By faith

By faith

We are made righteous by what loved ones? By Faith

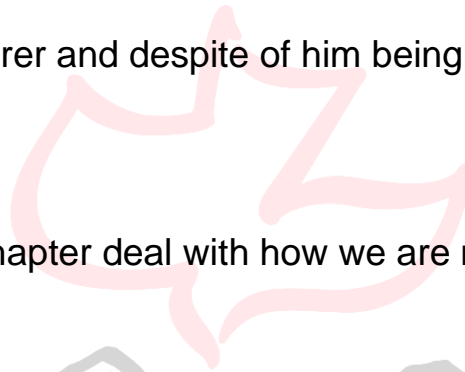
Good job!!!

Here is the thing church – Paul knows our human nature.

He knows that readers of this letter will agree that faith is a requirement.

But he also knows that there is that desire to play a role in one's justification.

So, some individuals will add requirements to faith.



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Rituals

Rites

Church membership

So, it is no longer by grace alone through faith alone through Christ alone.

And that church is a totally different gospel.

Let's pray...

Read Test

Over the past couple of weeks- we have seen Paul going over the issue of justification.

Paul wants the reader (you and I) to understand and to grasp that there is a right way to come to God and there is a wrong way.

The right way results in acceptance and the wrong way results in rejection.

And there always has been one way to approach God and it has always been on His terms – not our terms.

We don't come to God on the basis of how we think we should approach God or on the basis of why we think God should accept us.

Or on the basis of what any man thinks or says on how we should approach God.

His terms – not mans.

God has always based salvation on the revelation of Himself.

Salvation has always been by blood.

[Heb 9:22 NKJV] 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Salvation has always been by a Person.

[Jonah 2:9 NKJV] 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation [is] of the LORD."

[1Th 5:9 NKJV] 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

And salvation has always been by grace

A grace that is preceded by a sinner's faith.

Remember, God reached out to us.

[Tit 2:11 NKJV] 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

So for the person – who even for a moment, thinks that he or she can play a part in their justification because they have partaken of some religious rite or ritual

Or because they feel they can work their way to heaven – apart from blood, apart from a person, apart from grace –

They have clearly misunderstood God's revelation of Himself.

This is what makes this letter so powerful –

Let's look at our text -

[Rom 4:9-16 NKJV] 9 [Does] this blessedness then [come] upon the circumcised [only], or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

In verse 7,8 – Paul quotes David in Psalm 32

I want us to look at those verse again -

[Rom 4:7-8 NKJV] 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.”

Remember, David was a man who experienced God's forgiveness.

Again, not by keeping the law – because - he broke the law.

He was still a blessed man – he knew that.

So what Paul is doing here –

By implication

He is saying that the person who is blessed is the man or the woman who is justified by faith.

This is the man or the woman whose sins are not counted against them.

This is the salvation that David experienced in verse 6

This is the sin that is banished forever –

This is the person who is righteous without works.

This is the person whose sins are forgiven and covered.

This is the person whose heart has been cleansed and whose guilt has melted away.

Just like David

So what Paul is asking here – is this blessedness only available to the Jews or is it also made available to the Gentiles?

Is it available to the privileged few – or is it made available to anyone who will come to God, through Christ in faith.

Now, why would Paul ask this question?

You see – Paul knew that there would be individuals who would come to the conclusion that God’s people are God’s chosen people and that salvation is only available to the natural descendants of Abraham.

In other words – you had to be a Jew.

They would argue that God’s blessing of justification would be limited to a few.

And the blessing could only be received through some religious rite.

You had to join their church.

You had to follow their rules – a list of do’s and don’t’s

You had to partake of their religious ceremonies and ordinances.

And since most of the early believers were Jewish – some began to add requirements to faith for justification.

Yes, they agreed with Paul that faith was required – but added the requirement of circumcision.

They added the requirement of having to become a Jew before they become a Christian.

And this posed a big problem in the early church.

Of all the pushback that Paul had as he was spreading the gospel – the biggest pushback came from within the church – those that wanted to add to faith

This issue is addressed in Acts 15

And Paul addresses this issue in Galatians 2

**10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?
Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.**

Turn to Genesis 17

[Gen 17:9-11 NKJV] 9 And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 “This [is] My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 “and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Here in Genesis 17 –

Abraham is 99 years old.

God makes a covenant with Abraham and tells Abraham that as a sign of the covenant, circumcision was going to be required of him and his descendants.

And later on, in the chapter – Abraham was obedient to what God called him to do –

Not only does he circumcise his household and his son Ishmael – he also gets circumcised at the age of 99

But here is Paul's point –

God accounted for Abraham righteousness back in Genesis 15:6 –

This was some 13 years before he was circumcised.

That means that Abraham was justified by faith – apart from circumcision.

And this is the question that Paul is asking –

If Abraham can be justified by faith – apart from circumcision then that means that every one else can be justified by faith – apart from circumcision.

Remember,

Abraham was an idol worshipper.

And God reaches out to him –

God makes a promise to him

Abraham believes the promise on the basis of who God is – faith

And solely because of that – God placed in Abraham's account – justification – acceptance.

He received the righteousness first, the circumcision came later.

11 And he received **the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which [he had while still] uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe,** though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

Paul's argument here is that Gentiles – the uncircumcised, can be justified the same way that Abraham was justified – by faith alone.

Question –

Who are the Children of Abraham?

The Jews viewed circumcision as the link between them and Abraham.

Paul makes the argument here that Abraham's children are the ones who imitate Abraham's faith.

Abraham's faith is – a promise is given and by faith he believes.

Now – I also had you make a note that the sign of circumcision was a seal.

Circumcision was the seal of authenticity on Abraham's righteousness.

It wasn't circumcision that made him righteous, it was the proof that he was already righteous.

The problem that happened in the early church was that the seal was being magnified above the thing that it authenticated.

So you had those who were circumcised and uncircumcised – and according to them - justified and unjustified.

Circumcision was a mark

It was a reminder to the Jews of the promises of God and of God's covenant.

As believers, we are also marked.

But the mark that we experience isn't a physical mark that is done with human hands.

It is a spiritual mark made by the power of God through the Holy Spirit.

As God Himself dwells inside of us.

And we receive this mark - at the moment of justification – when by faith, just like Abraham, we accept both the meaning and the message of His promise.

Turn to Ephesians 1

The scriptures tell us that the moment we are justified – we are given a seal.

And that seal is a declaration that the transaction (as Jesus died on the cross for us) was legal and valid -

Look at verse 13 and 14

[Eph 1:13-14 NKJV] 13 In Him you also [trusted], after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were

sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The seal – the Holy Spirit living inside of us – is the down payment that eternity is real.

How do we know that we have been justified?

We have to ask ourselves.

Do we have the seal?

Does the Holy Spirit dwell inside of us?

Question -

Can we know that the Holy Spirit lives inside of us?

Yes

Write this verse down -

[Rom 8:16 NKJV] 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

We don't have to wonder if we are really Christians or not. God's children know who they are.

Because as I said during our study in the Gospel of John – the Holy Spirit will always point us to Jesus.

To love Jesus

To walk with Jesus

To talk with Jesus

To get to know Jesus

And the amazing thing church is this – if God has sealed us with the presence of the Holy Spirit, then we have received a seal that is not made with human hands – it is a divine work given by God that cannot be undone by man.

No man can ever tell you – “you are no longer a Christian”

12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only [are] of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham [had while still] uncircumcised.

I had you make a note that Abraham is referred to as the father of circumcision.

And the reason is because there is a difference between being called Abraham's descendants and Abraham's children –

Turn to John 8

Here we have Jesus speaking to the religious rulers –

The Jews prided themselves on their lineage to Abraham

Look at what Jesus says -

[Jhn 8:37-39 NKJV] 37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 “I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.” 39 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.

They may have been descendants of Abraham – but Jesus says they were not children of Abraham –

Because if they were Abraham’s children, their conduct would resemble Abraham’s conduct.

What are the works of Abraham???

He listened to when God spoke

He believed when God spoke

He obeyed when God commanded

He exercised when God asked him to exercise his faith

Here is the point that Paul is making –

Both the believing Jew and the believing Gentile can claim Abraham as their father and identify as his child – when they believe God by faith.

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world [was] not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law [are] heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,

Paul explains once again that the promise that God gave to Abraham to bless him and his descendants was not conditioned upon Abraham's observance of the law of God.

Think about the promise again –

God had Abraham look up to the dark sky and promised him that his descendants were going to be like the stars in the sky – impossible to count.

First of all, we must remember that Abraham was around way before the Jews were given the law some 500 years later.

Rather than the law, Paul tells us at the end of verse 13 that the promise was based on, “the righteousness that comes by faith.”

Remember, Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.

And so the point that Paul is making here is that God promised Abraham and his seed that he would be heir of the world – and the promise was not conditioned on the law

It was an unconditional promise of grace to be received by faith.

The same kind of faith which we obtain God's righteousness.

Abraham believed a promise

And in the same way we believe a promise –

That God had, in Christ, has given a message of hope that we can believe and embrace.

15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law [there is] no transgression.

Question -

In the Garden of Eden – how many prohibitions did Adam and Eve had?

1

They couldn't eat from a certain tree.

They could have done anything they wanted and yet – they broke that one rule.

The root of sin isn't in breaking the law, but in breaking trust with God; with denying His loving, caring purpose in every command He gives.

Before Adam sinned he broke trust with God – therefore God's plan of redemption is centered on a relationship of trusting love – faith – instead of law-keeping. When we center our relationship with God on law-keeping instead of trusting love, we go against His whole plan.

16 Therefore [it is] of faith that [it might be] according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

The promise can only be sure if it is according to grace.

If law is the basis of our salvation, then our salvation depends on our performance in keeping the law – and no one can keep the law good enough to be saved by it.

Therefore. A law-promise of salvation can never be sure.

The law produces God's wrath – not justification

Therefore, it is of faith

That means that self-salvation is impossible

It is a gift from God – according to grace

And we can either humbly accept it or reject it

And by accepting it –

It brings us into God's favor

It brings us into God's family

You see loves ones, the person who sees the finished work on the cross and say,

I have nothing to give, nothing to contribute other than the humility to just submit to what God has done in Christ – that is the person who is certain about his or her salvation.

And that is the want Paul wants us to grasp.

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

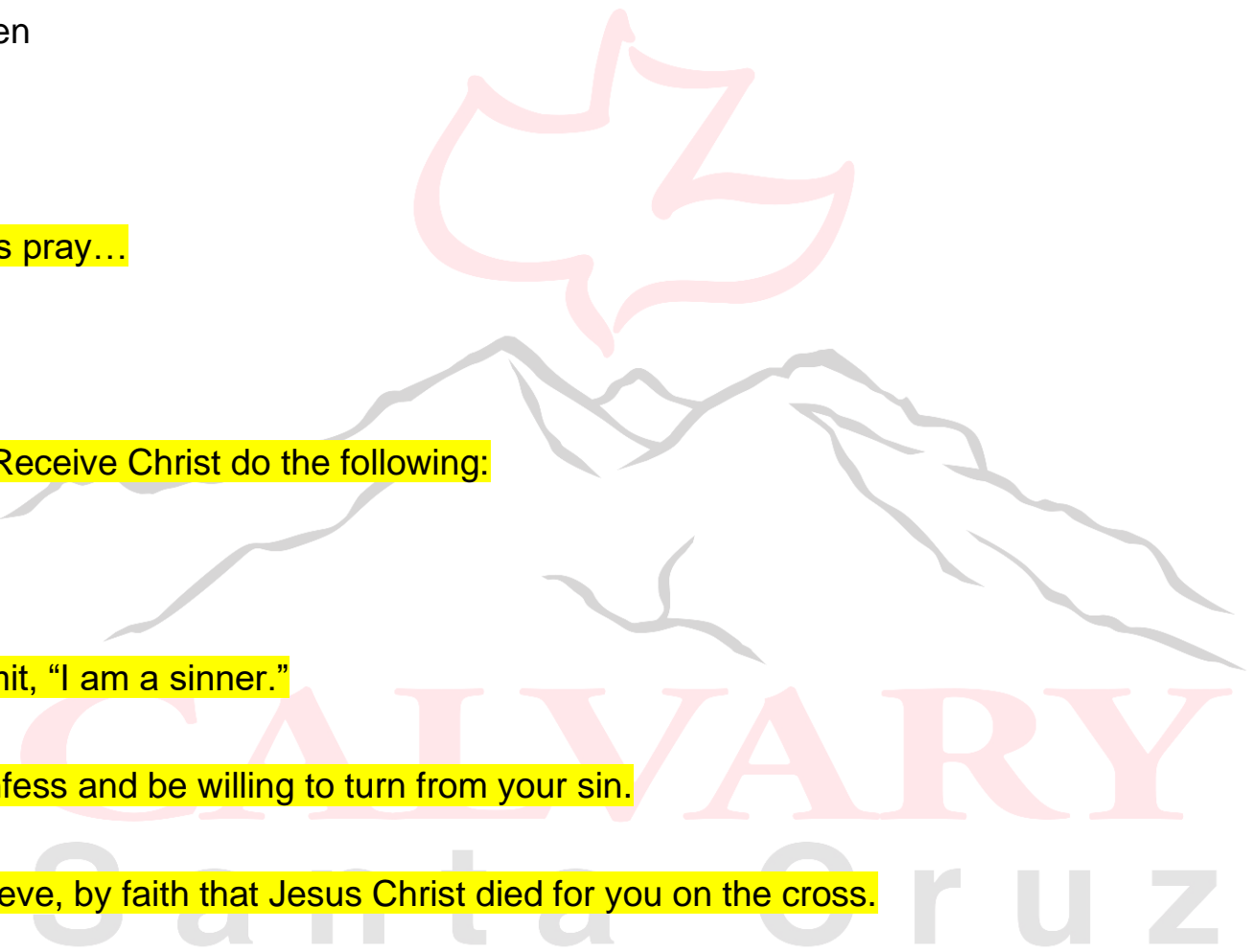
Admit, "I am a sinner."

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.

[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.!



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