

Faith March 12, 2012

Today I want to tell you what happens when you accept the truth of Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is an incredible gift from God, altering your life eternally. The gospel and what it does in your life is the basis of our study of Romans. So the following things happen at salvation;

- A. Redeemed-Jesus paid the price for your sin on the cross and purchased you for God. Now you belong to Him.
- B. Forgiven: on the basis of Christ's payment, God no longer holds your sins against you.
- C. Justified: God declares you are no long guilty of your sins.
- D. Reconciled: It is now possible for you to have a personal relationship with God.
- E. Sanctified: You are set apart as one of God's children and His Holy Spirit works within you to transform your life
- F. Glorified: This is the last step you take when you leave this earth and enter heaven. There you will receive rewards and experience all the glories the LORD has for you.

My prayer for you is that you have experienced this wonderful salvation, which cost Jesus His life and is offered free to you.

Last week we ended chapter 3 of Romans where we were told again "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" but based in our faith in the finished work of Jesus we can be justified by God. That word justified means declared righteous; God says we are no longer guilty. Since all sin is against God only He can declare us not guilty, based on the historical fact that Jesus died and paid the price for our sin.

Remember now that Paul is writing this letter to the believers at Rome and that church was made up of Jews and Gentiles. Paul is taking lots of time to explain how salvation works for the Jew and the Gentile; of course it's the same for all.

In chapter 4 Paul is going to show us how it was that Abraham was justified by faith and not by the works of the law, specifically circumcision. The bible is careful to point out the time line in Genesis and so we know that Abraham was justified or declared righteous by faith 13 years before he was circumcised. When we consider at the origin of the Jewish race and father Abraham, it is clear from that faith was the sole requirement between God and man centuries before the Law was given to Moses. In his attempt to convince his Jewish audience that justification was and always has been by faith it might open the door of the gospel for them. Abraham clearly did not attempt to earn God's favor by works and neither should the believers in Rome.

Romans 4:1

Paul will make it clear that Abraham is the father of all believers. He was the first Jew. The Jews had a tradition that descendents could have merit with God, even salvation on the ground of their ancestors' righteousness. In John 8:33 the Jewish leaders made that exact claim to Jesus, which He denied.

Romans 4:2

Obviously, if Abraham earned his salvation by his works he would have something to brag about. Some Jews believed that Abraham was right with God because of his obedience, especially because of the test of obedience in the sacrifice of Isaac. Of course, Isaac was not sacrificed instead the bible says; Genesis 22:8, God provided Himself a sacrifice. You could read this, as God proved the sacrifice in the ram caught in the bushes or God Himself was the sacrifice in Jesus. In any case this command to sacrifice his son Isaac was a picture of the sacrifice that God willingly made of His Son for us.

Romans 4:3

This is quoting Genesis 15:6, just in case any of the Jewish readers missed the point. Moses wrote down the first 5 books of the bible, this had to have been revealed to him by God. The only work or deed Abraham did was to believe and that deed earned him the right to be declared righteous by God.

Romans 4:4-5

Here the example of employment is used. If you go to work and earn your wages or salary it is not a gift, it is what you are owed.

In contrast with the wage earner is the sinner who trusts God, who comes to God in faith and who has not performed any rituals or religious works.

These are declared righteous, or justified, by God because of their faith, not because of their works.

Romans 4:6-8

How can God do this? Paul here quotes Psalm 32, written by King David, speaking of the joy of those who are forgiven because of the grace of God.

When you think of the wickedness of your sin against a holy God and His mercy and grace to declare you righteous, justified, forgiven, not guilty how can you not be joyful? It's the greatest gift you could ever receive.

Romans 4:9-10

It was Abraham's faith, not his faithfulness to rituals that brought his justification from God and that is available for anyone, Jew, Gentile, anyone.

God accepted Abraham's faith and declared him righteous and after that the ritual of circumcision was instituted 13 years later. The bible in Genesis 15 is careful to give us this timeline so that we understand that righteousness for Abraham was by faith and not by works or rituals.

Romans 4:11-12

Circumcision for Abraham was a sign of his covenant with God. Abraham is the father of all those justified by faith, he is the father of the uncircumcised because he was declared or reckoned righteous before he was circumcised. Paul is repeating that the righteousness that comes from trusting God is available to the Jew and the Gentile because circumcision was given as a sign of Abraham's faith and as a seal guaranteeing God's promises, not as something to brag or feel pride about.

Romans 4:13

The promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendents, spiritual descendents is in Genesis 12:2-3. This is not the same as the promise to the Jews to inherit the Land of Israel.

Romans 4:14-15

If people must obey laws to become righteous then God's promise of salvation by faith is meaningless. If the law does not bring righteousness what does it bring? It says here it brings punishment. In other words, the purpose of the law is to show us that we cannot achieve our own righteousness because we cannot keep the Law. The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break. Think about the 10 commandments, how many of those have you perfectly kept?

Romans 4:16-17

What God gives by grace can only be accepted by faith. The promise to Abraham that he and his offspring would inherit the world in Romans 4:13 refers to spiritual offspring, those who believe God and are justified by faith. Not only was Abraham the physical father of the Jewish nation, he is the spiritual father of the church.

Then Paul described the God that he and Abraham and you and I believe in; He is the Creator and sustainer of life. God called into being the life giving power of Abraham and Sarah to have a son even though their childbearing power was dead.

Romans 4:18-19

Abraham believed he would become the father of many nations because God said he would, not because he had anything in himself to make that happen. God's ability to fulfill His promise overcomes any obstacle you can imagine.

God has made us some promises. He has said He would never leave us or forsake us. He has promised forgiveness and eternal life to all who trust in Jesus for salvation. Nothing can interfere with these promises.

Romans 4:20-21

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have it said about you that you never wavered in unbelief? This kind of faith can be yours, ask God to strengthen and renew your faith. If all we expect is what we can produce in our own puny human effort, we are missing the point. God does more than we can ask or think, much more than we can do. He does what is humanly impossible, He changes hearts and lives.

Abraham was not perfect; the bible shows us all his flaws and errors, yet he trusted that God would do what He promised.

Romans 4:22

Abraham had saving faith and we can have that same faith. We believe in the same life giving God, we have faith in what He has promised and this is the good news, the gospel. Through Jesus the Messiah anyone can have the same close personal relationship with God that Abraham had. God has made promises to me and He has kept them, He will do the same for you.

Romans 4:23-25

Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness; this describes how Abraham became righteous and not only Abraham but also the way every person after Abraham becomes righteous before God. God will declare us righteous if we believe in Him Who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead. What makes us acceptable to God or righteous is not what we do, not our works but our faith.

Abraham died without seeing the fulfillment of all the promises; the greatest of course, was Jesus, who came from Abraham's seed through Mary.

Just as God brought life from the deadness of Sarah's womb and Abraham, He brings life because of Jesus from the deadness of our spirit. New life is created in us when we have faith in the promise of God to save us from our sin because Jesus took our punishment.

What have we learned through these first 4 chapters of Romans? God has made Himself evident through what He has made and if we turn to Him He will draw us to Himself. We have seen the utter sinfulness of mankind, how certain men know in their hearts about God but don't want any authority over them so they suppress the knowledge of God, sin shamefully and encourage others to do the same.

Then in chapter 2 we learned that there are groups of people who have religion, they even go to church and worship God but they have made up all kinds of ways to make themselves righteous, doing rituals, following traditions, everything but admit they need a Savior. These are just as lost as the pagan and hedonist.

Then Paul reiterated that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but God in His great mercy has provided a way to be declared righteous, a free gift because of Jesus.

Chapter 4 was written primarily to the Jewish people and warned them that each one is accountable before God; there is no salvation in being a descendent of a saved man as some Jews believed.

Abraham is presented as the prime example of a man saved by faith, "he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness" and that is the way every human being has ever been saved. We believe what God has said about our being declared righteous because of Jesus death, burial and resurrection.

Romans 5 brings some difficult concepts but we will walk through them one word at a time. Keep in mind the next 4 chapters; 5-9 present the two-sided reality of the Christian life. On the one hand we are complete in Christ. On the other hand, we are growing in Christ, becoming more and more like Him, we are in the process of sanctification. We have good days and not so good days. The fact is, however, we should be coming closer to Christ daily.

Romans 5:1

Therefore is our first word so we must find out what it is "there for"; and it is a conclusion based on the previous 4 chapters. Paul has already shown that Jews and Gentiles alike are justified by faith. He is telling us how being declared righteous affects our relationship with God. What does it mean to be justified by God? If you have believed you can be saved and then fall away and lose your salvation, you have not understood the meaning of justification. If you have been taught that you won't know until you die whether you have salvation then there is not a true concept of justification.

Notice, having been justified by faith is past tense, it is done and over it is not some process.

Notice secondly who did the justifying, it was God Himself according to Romans 8:33. So the source of our justification is God, not our works.

The words justify and righteous are two forms of the same root work so you could translate this verse; therefore having been declared righteous or justified on the principle of faith, we have peace with God. The truth is that because of God's grace, His unmerited favor, we have been freely justified.

The reason we have been justified is because of the blood of Jesus Christ which is the biblical phrase meaning His sacrificial death. He did not save us by living, He saved us by dying.

Our justification is proved by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The resurrection is proof that our justification is a finished work. Do you see why you can never lose your salvation? It isn't what you do; it is what God has done and what you have become.

So for justification we have just seen four facts of work accomplished by God; it is by God, by grace, by the blood of Jesus and by the resurrection. What is our part in this then?

Faith. Faith is the means by which the great free gift of justification is given to me. God gives faith to me and through it flows justification.

As a result of justification the first thing we know is peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Remember the message of the angel choir when Jesus was born; peace on earth, good will to men.

What does it mean to have peace with God? It means we have no sin barrier between us, it has been removed. We no longer have a judgment to face, our sin was judged at the cross, now we live under the protection of God.

Just think of all the things people do to get peace. Would you say it is the thing most people are searching for? What they are seeking by too much work, too much money, too much power can never achieve peace. What all are seeking is peace with God, and sadly most people don't even know what it is they want. They

think, "if I just had a little more-----, you fill in the blank, I would be happy, but that won't do it, only peace with God can bring happiness.

The dictionary gives several definitions of peace. One is freedom from hostility or war; another is freedom from disturbances, which is quiet, tranquility. Another definition is freedom from mental or spiritual disturbance, calmness, and sense of guilt.

In Matt 11:28-30 Jesus said; "come unto Me all that labor and are heavy laden or burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light". Notice the word "rest" is used twice, it is a rest that is "given", and Jesus said He would give us "rest" or peace.