

How are we saved? How does God justify us? Nothing that we do. It is by faith alone that is given to us

## **I. Faith not of this world**

So Paul sets us up and expounds on the one thought he writes in **Romans 3:22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...**

Paul beats a dead horse what would later be one of the five solas of the Protestant Reformation, that is, *sola fide*. Paul is going to show us how we have a relationship with the Lord of heavens and the earth... *by faith alone*.

Lets go back a bit to 3:27 and set us up for chapter 4:

**3:27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

Verse 31 is to double triple make sure that we don't have a bunch of Christians running around proclaiming Jesus Christ to be their saved but they continue to live in sin with unrepentant hearts. James, brother of Jesus, extends the idea of verse 31 in **James 2:14-26 "Faith Without Works Is Dead"**.

So verses 27 through 31 gives the basic overview for the idea of "by faith alone". To drive the point home, Paul is going to use a test subject:

**4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."**

The Old Testament is just that, a testament, about salvation through faith alone by God's grace alone. Think of Noah in **Genesis 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.**, story of Jacob stealing his birthright and God still uses him or Joseph, full of pride, gets drugged through the pits over and over again by grace of God so that Joseph could be used by God to save His people. David, adulterer and murderer, saved by God. Isaiah, minding his own business being rich and noble, and Jesus Christ shows up and shows just how sinful and unrighteous he was and Jesus Christ saves him.

Paul is going to use Abraham as the test case for justification by faith alone especially presenting his case to the Jews. It is all about keeping it in context. If your audience is Jewish and if you can use Abraham or one of the patriarchs as your examples, the audience will know exactly what you are referring to. Be like "Oh yea, oh yea." Jesus was the master of speaking in context to his immediate audience and getting the point across. Here, in order for Paul to drive this point home with the Jews in Rome, he will breakdown some of the Abraham chapters in Genesis.

We see in Genesis 15 where God makes covenant with Abram and told him, "If you are able

to number the stars, that is how many children you shall have." Who are the sons and daughters of Abraham? If you have faith in Christ, then that would make you one of Abraham's kids (***Galatians 3:7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.***).

Did God make good on his promise? With about 2.1 billion people professing themselves to be Christians and therefore sons and daughters of Abraham, I would said so. But the point of all of this is, did Abraham live to see Lord's promise come to fruition? Not quite.

Hebrews reemphasizes this:

***Hebrews 11:8-13 (ESV) 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.***

Skip to...

***12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. \*\*\*\*13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. \*\*\*\****

What were their eyes set upon? The kingdom of God. Where was Abraham living when they saw the things promised to him? Until Christ died and resurrected, they were in Paradise awaiting the Son of God to open up the gates of heaven. Once in heaven, I know that all the old testament saints knew at that moment their salvation was complete and they were now right standing with God in heaven. They were strangers in this world, obedient to God until God called them home.

This is not our home. We are but mere strangers, foreigners, immigrants in a strange land. Peter mention the idea of foreigner in:

***1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.***

Hence, why the Lord called us to love the stranger especially in ***Leviticus 19:33-34 (ESV) "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.***

Like many sojourners, we are just passing through this world for however long God has us here until He calls us home. That is not to say that we just should wait around and wait around for Jesus to return when he clearly states that we should go proclaim His gospel to the ends of this earth. Don't focus on this world. Obey God. Pass through it. Like the song says, "Everything I am for your kingdoms cause, As I go from nothing to Eternity."

## **II. Faith doesn't spring forth from what we do**

**4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,**

Righteousness by God are not wages earned by us as though we are employees and God as though He is some type of employer. Not like I, as a Christian, can punch a timeclock and come to God on payday expecting a paycheck. Even when God was laying down the new covenant in Hosea 2, He declares, "You will not longer call me, "My Baal" or "My Master". God is not your slavemaster or your employer. God never wanted to call us "My boss" "My slavemaster" or "My master". Your master would be somebody on this earth and usually something that was created by God or made by us so that we could worship it.

Put it this way, when you tend to worship created things, how many of us know that they really don't make for good gods? If your faith is in your spouse or your boyfriend or girlfriend, how many of us know they will fail you as god and they are not going to keep up the idea of god that you have formed in your head. Or you chase after bigger and better material possessions and you then find yourself drowning in debt. Those things are just your masters who ask everything of you and give you absolute nothing. God is nothing like that in that He asks you to have faith in him and worship him but because He is a good King and Lord, he provides for you your faith and provides a way for you to worship Him.

Or how about David who throughout all of his Psalms claimed the Lord to be His salvation, saviour, rock, guide, etc., etc. Never once did you hear David say, "Look at how good I am. Look at all the laws I have kept. Therefore, Lord, save me." Literally, quite the opposite. "I suck. I have sin. You have forgiven me. You have saved me." Check out Paul as he quotes Psalm 32:1-2:

**6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:**

**7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;**

**8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."**

David's faith is in and of the Lord and Lord is His Saviour. Our faith is in Jesus Christ and He has forgiven us of all our sins and cleanses us for all sins, by us and against us. By our belief in His death on the cross and His following resurrection, we are made new and standing right with God.

**9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.**

God calls Abram in Genesis 12

God makes a covenant with him in Genesis 15  
God calls Abraham to be circumcised in Genesis 17

God saved Abraham before he was even circumcised. Abraham's faith was of God before he was even circumcised. Our outwardly appearances (you pray 3 times a day, you read the bible 5 times a year, you volunteer in orphanages, etc.) as nothing to do with our justification by Jesus Christ but rather it is the faith in Jesus Christ that counts for our salvation alone.

**13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.**

Which world was he referring to? You mean this world or the New Heavens and New Earth in Revelation 21 when our salvation is completed by God and we can then spend eternity with Him? We are not to be heirs because we simply obeyed Scripture and did what we thought was right. We are heirs through our faith in Christ Jesus.

**14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.**

If this promise of a complete and final salvation is due to us upholding the law, then our righteousness is by us doing the right thing. It is the thought that God is pleased in me because I didn't have sex with my girlfriend or my boyfriend and yet all I can think about is having sex with that person. It is the thought that oh, I didn't get drunk today but all I can think about is getting drunk. I didn't kill my dad today for what he did to me when I was a child but in my heart is filled with hatred and rage against my father.

Sure you can white knuckle it until you are dead but was your faith in Christ or what you did or did not do. We can all seem to do the right thing but Jesus made it the point over and over again it is all about the heart.

Faith and works are essentially fundamentally opposed. One is of God. One is of men. Here is the thing. Faith is of Jesus Christ, authored by Jesus Christ and perfected by Jesus Christ. Everything about faith is of Jesus Christ. Where he is saying that law brings about wrath is that the law is standard of God which is what? Perfection. All of mankind failed to live up to that perfection especially since most of them tried to do it without God. God's wrath is stored up and brought down upon His son, Jesus Christ, who became sin and was perfectly satisfied once and for all (propitiation).

**16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,**

Now that we have just triple-killed the argument for salvation by works, Paul says, we can all see that our salvation rests on Jesus Christ alone so that no matter what we do (Genesis 15:12-16), His covenant is upheld and is freely available to all the sons and daughters of Abraham.

**17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence**

***the things that do not exist. 18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God...***

God made a promise with Abraham and Abraham had to "hope against hope". The hope he had before growing together with Sarah when they were younger and wanted children but couldn't. All of those years of wanting children and couldn't. Just as he was as good as dead, God came to him around 90 and said "You will be the father of many nations" and just to reemphasize His own sovereignty and provision, didn't give them Isaac until 10 years later.

Listen, it is okay to say "How is this possible?". Abraham and Sarah asked that very question. When Gabriel approached Mary, she asked "How is this possible because I am still a virgin." In both instances, it has never been done before. Remember, not a handful of verses in Luke 1, Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a son and silenced him until John was born. What was the difference? Zechariah knew that God conceived children to the elderly before just like the case of Abraham and Sarah.

***cont. 20 but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." 23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also.***

Abraham is a man who:

- called apart by God to leave his kin and country
- start anew
- father not just a country but other nations
- whose lineage will be that of the Son of God who would then
- save all of mankind

Abraham had faith in God and God made Abraham righteous.

***cont. 24 It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.***

Jesus Christ became our sin, nailed himself to the cross, took the full blunt of the wrath of God the Father, died, conquered hell and death by resurrection so that God could justify us. It is our faith that Christ's work on the cross was enough for us to be made righteous so that we could have a relationship with the Father and be with Him forever.

Conclusion

Please remember that our salvation is not by what we do and whether or not it pleases God but rather it is simply our faith in the work of Jesus Christ that our salvation rests. We have to believe that Christ's death on cross was good enough.