

# Romans

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”

– Romans 1:16

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- 3:27-4:23 – A summary of this section:
  - Arguing against the prominent Jewish argument that:
    1. No one can be saved without following the Old Law
    2. No one can be saved without circumcision
      - cf. Acts 15; Gal 5:1-6, 6:11-15; Titus 1:10-16, etc.
  - This argument is false: Abraham was accounted as righteous *without* circumcision and *without* the Law
    - i.e. a person CAN be justified without the Old Law or circumcision
  - Abraham, a sinner just like everyone else (Rom 3:23), was counted as righteous *because of his faith*
    - And when Paul speaks of Abraham's "belief" or "faith" he is **ALWAYS** talking about a continual, obedient faith
  - **We are heirs to the promise if we share Abraham's faith**

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- 3:27-31 – Does anyone have the right to boast of his own righteousness above anyone else?
  - **No!** If the law could actually save a person, maybe so, but no one kept the law perfectly (with the exception of Christ)
    - cf. Acts 13:39; Rom 3:23; Heb 10:1-4; etc.
  - **But**, if salvation comes by God’s grace through faith, “*the law of faith*,” we have no right to boast, even in salvation (cf. Eph 2:8-10)
  - To sum up verses 27-28:
    - If you were saved by your perfect works (i.e. keeping the law exactly), maybe you could boast over others whose works are imperfect...
    - But you can’t! 1:18-3:20 exhaustively declared that all people sin!
    - Those justified in God’s sight are made righteous by faith: **but if all saved people share the same faith, what is there to boast about?**

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- 3:27-31 – two questions examined:
  - Is God the God of the Jews only?
    - If He is only the God of the Jews, who created and continues to provide for the Gentiles?
    - Paul appeals to God's *unity* (Deut 6:4), in the same way Christ did (e.g. Matt 5:45)
    - Preparing for the discussion of God's promise to Abraham, which encompassed *all nations* (Gen 12:3)
  - Does the gospel of faith nullify the promises of the Old Law?
    - Absolutely not: much to the contrary, the gospel of Christ **fulfills** the promises and shadows of the Old Testament
    - cf. Matt 5:17-20; Gal 3:15-18,26-29; Heb 8:3-13; etc.

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- **A broader look at the context of Romans 4:**
  - Some of the Jews of Paul's day taught that a person must be saved by *doing the works* of the Law (see Acts 15)
  - Today many believers in Christ believe that a person *doesn't have to do anything* to be saved through Christ
  - Carefully reading the **Scriptures** shows that the truth is actually somewhere in between these two views:
    - No person can **earn** salvation by doing any number of good works (cf. Titus 3:5; Eph 2:9)
    - **However**, God requires **obedient faith** to access the grace that extends to all the world in Christ
  - **Hearing (Rom 10:17), believing (John 6:29), repentance (Acts 17:30), confession (Rom 10:9), and baptism (Acts 2:38) are all works required by God to be saved by grace through faith!**

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- Three concepts we need to define more closely:
  - **Boasting** – if God requires obedience to be saved, do these works of faith allow us to boast?
    - No way! Even upon obeying the gospel you have *earned* nothing – your salvation is still dependent wholly on the grace of God!
    - If all believers obey *in the same way* to be saved, how could we boast one against another (cf. Eph 4:4-6; I Cor 12:13; Rom 6:3-4)?
  - **Grace** – does the grace of God mean that He has no requirements for man whatsoever to be saved by grace?
    - Clearly not: if that were true, would not *everyone* be saved?
    - The grace of God is **not** “unconditional favor” – whoever produced that definition did a great disservice to God’s word!
    - Providing the way for man’s salvation and teaching him how to walk in it (cf. Titus 2:11-12) is wholly an act of God’s grace!

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- **Three concepts we need to define more closely:**
  - ***Grace (continued)*** – God’s grace is unmerited, unearned favor and kindness: but He always has **requirements!**
    - Noah found grace in the sight of God (Gen 6:8) – and by faith he obeyed the Lord and was saved (Heb 11:7)
    - Jericho was “*given*” by God to Israel, but He commanded: “You shall march...” (cf. Josh 6:2ff)
    - John 1:17, Eph 2:8; Rom 3:25 – God gives man His grace through Christ: *but only to those who have faith* (i.e. conditional)
  - ***No matter how many requirements or conditions God places on our forgiveness, salvation is still by His grace!***
    - On God’s part, salvation is by grace; on man’s part, salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ.

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- **Three concepts we need to define more closely:**
  - *Grace (continued)* – so what do Romans 4:4-5 mean?
    - “works” in context refers to the system of law (e.g. Old Law)
    - The Jews viewed themselves as **entitled** to salvation since they practiced circumcision and the rest of the Old Law
    - By contrast, those saved by grace through faith can boast no such entitlement: we didn’t earn salvation – it was a gift from God
  - *“to him who does not work”* in context refers to the person who does not practice the works of the Old Law
    - It cannot possibly mean “him who chooses not to obey”: Abraham was saved by faith only as he obeyed (Heb 11:8; Jam 2:21ff)
    - To say that grace means no obedience is required violates explicit commands in Scripture (e.g. John 6:29; Acts 2:38; etc.)

# Justified By Grace Through Faith

- **Three concepts we need to define more closely:**
  - *Faith* – throughout the book of Romans, Paul is continually talking about true faith: i.e. *obedient, trusting belief*
    - Rom 1:5 – “obedience to the faith”
    - Rom 2:8 – judgment comes to those “who do not obey”
    - Rom 6:17 – Christians “obeyed from the heart” the gospel
    - Rom 10:16 – Unbelieving Jews were lost because they did not “obey the gospel” which called them to faith (vs. 17)
    - Rom 15:18, 16:19,26 – Paul preached so that people would become obedient to the gospel of Christ
  - *This same continually obedient, trusting faith was shared by Abraham, and by it he was found righteous – and it is to Abraham that the conversation turns in Romans chapter 4.*

# The Saving Faith of Abraham

- **Romans 4:1-6 – Abraham was saved by faith, not by circumcision nor the works of law**
  - ***“found according to the flesh”*** – evidently means to ask, “Was Abraham’s salvation gained by the sign in his flesh, i.e. circumcision?”
    - Alternate rendering, “What shall we say that Abraham, our father according to the flesh, has discovered?” – i.e. (in context) discovered concerning his own justification
  - Abraham couldn’t boast to God of salvation by works because even he was not sinless (cf. Rom 3:23)
  - The Scriptures state that Abraham was saved by faith (Gen 15:6)
    - **And that was written *before* he was given the sign of circumcision, and certainly before the Old Law.**

# The Saving Faith of Abraham

- **Two notes about Romans 4:3 –**
  - Paul did not quote Gen 15:6 to refer to any one particular “saving moment” in Abraham’s life:
    - Also quoted in Gal 3:6 (referring to Gen 12, cf. Rom 4:13-25) and Jam 2:23 (referring to Gen 22)
    - Abraham continually trusted in God and continually obeyed Him: **this true faith made Abraham righteous in God’s sight!**
  - Paul certainly was not speaking about a “conversion” in which Abraham transferred from being lost to being saved:
    - **By the time Gen 15:6 was written, Abraham had already been an obedient believer for a long time!**
    - Gen 11:27-12:4a – with Acts 7:2-4 and Heb 11:8

# The Saving Faith of Abraham

- **Romans 4:1-6 – Abraham was saved by faith, not by circumcision or the works of law**
  - David confirms this definition of righteousness *apart from* perfect law-keeping:
    - Ps 32:1-2 – written during the Mosaic age
    - Again, not speaking of an unbeliever becoming a believer, but of a believer continually finding forgiveness in God's grace
    - The Law *pointed out David's sins*: **he must have found forgiveness from God apart from the Law, i.e. again, by faith!**
    - With this quotation, Paul also defined exactly what he means by “righteousness” – it means to be treated by God as forgiven.
  - i.e. this is judicial righteousness – not because we are better, but because God *treats us better* than our sins deserve (cf. Ps 103:10)

# Who Can Be Saved Through Faith?

- **Romans 4:9-12 – Now we draw some conclusions:**
  - If Abraham (Patriarchal age) and David (Mosaic age) were justified (i.e. made righteous) by faith, is this righteousness only a blessing for the circumcision, i.e. those who keep the Mosaic Law?
    - Abraham was justified by faith *before* he was circumcised (cf. Gen 15:5 with Gen 17), i.e. *before he was given that command*
    - Circumcision was given as a sign/seal of the “righteousness of faith” he had *before* he was circumcised (vs. 10-11)
  - Consequently, Abraham is the spiritual father of:
    - The uncircumcised (i.e. those never commanded to follow the Old Law) as they share his saving faith (Gal 3:5-9)
    - The circumcised (who, before the cross, absolutely had to obey the Old Law), *only* as they shared his saving faith! (Gal 5:4-6)

# Grace Accomplishes What Law Could Not

- **Romans 4:13-17 – More explanation on who can be saved:**
  - vs. 13-15 – God does not make descendents of Abraham through the Law: if so there would be no spiritual descendents!
    - The Law provided no means of atonement (Heb 7:18-19; 10:1-4)
    - No one succeeded (besides Christ) to keep it (Acts 15:10)
  - vs. 16-17 – Instead, righteousness comes by faith in accordance with grace (cf. Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7)
    - i.e. Abraham's descendents are born through faith, s.t. that he is indeed the "*father of many nations*" (Gen 17:5):
    - both those who are of the Law, by their faith, and those who are not of the Law, by faith also (cf. Rom 4:11-12):
      - In God's sight, this makes us Abraham's descendents (vs. 17)
      - And if descendents, then heirs of his promise (Gal 3:23-29)

# The Characteristics of Abraham's Faith

- Romans 4:17-22 – If we're going to share Abraham's faith, we had better understand what faith he had:
  - Believed in God who gives life to the dead (Heb 11:17-19)
  - Believed in God who calls things which do not exist yet as though they did (Gen 17:1-8, cf. Eph 2:14-22; I Pet 2:10)
    - This belief caused Abraham to **hope** when there was no hope to be had (vs. 18-20 with Heb 11:11-12)
    - This belief caused Abraham to **obey** God without wavering:
      - vs. 20-22 – Who could honestly read Romans 4 and argue that we can still be justified even if we ignore God's commands?
      - Does disobedient behavior describe the faith of Abraham?
      - Heb 11:8-10 – By faith, Abraham obeyed all God commanded him to do: *if he did not, would we say he really believed?*

# Abraham's Faith: Conclusions

- **How was righteousness accounted/imputed to Abraham?**
  - By grace through faith (vs. 16), which included:
    - Unwavering belief in the all-powerful, all-knowing God (vs. 17ff)
    - Hope beyond hope that God is able to do *whatever* He promises (vs. 18,20-21)
    - Trust in God's word that led him to obey *whatever* God commanded him to do
      - Knowledge of Abraham's history in following God is presumed for anyone to understand Paul's argument in Romans 4
      - Evidence of Abraham's obedient faith is everywhere in Genesis 12-25, the examples used in Romans, Hebrews 11, etc.
      - Heb 11:8 – "*By faith Abraham obeyed...*"
- *'And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness"'* (vs. 22)

# Was All Of This Written For Abraham's Sake?

- **Romans 4:23-25** – “Now it was not written for his sake alone...but also for us”
  - The record of Abraham's faith is there for **us to learn by** (i.e. Christians) – cf. Rom 15:4, II Tim 3:14-16
  - Abraham is the spiritual father of all the saved (vs. 11,12,16): we will be saved if we imitate the faith that he had!
  - What are *we* called upon to believe through the hearing of the gospel?
    - All, of course, goes back to believing in God (Heb 11:6)
    - Brings us back to Romans 1:1-4 – that Jesus, the son of God, came in the flesh to bear our transgressions unto death and be raised according to the power of God
    - *This is what Paul will go on to explain in chapter 5*

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