

Good News To Believe  
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Allen Power

Romans 3:28-4:25

Last week we concluded with Romans 3:23-24:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

- All have sinned...but all can be justified freely (made righteous in God's sight) by God's grace, through simple faith in Christ.
- Someone might ask us: "Is it that simple and straightforward?" Let's use an illustration:

It's FUN to be given a gift! Question: Other than salvation, humanly speaking, can you remember some of the best gifts you ever received?

- Gifts are FUN. But, some of us struggle with receiving a gift. I'll admit that I am in that category.
- Maybe it's a deep rooted sense of wanting to pay our own way.
- Maybe it's a concern that we don't want to be in debt to anyone for anything.
- When I was a teenager I couldn't wait to earn my own money and pay my own way.
- Parents, How many times have you heard from your kids: "I can do it myself!"
- That can be frustrating when they're small. How does that attitude feel as they grow? We're glad to see them develop that desire to do things for themselves. We call that developing:
- Self R\_\_\_\_\_ (reliance)
- That's a good thing.
- In fact, as they get older, if they DON'T seem to want to be "self reliant" and make their own way we become concerned.
- What do we say about someone who wants others to pay for them in stead of paying their own way? We say they have no:
- Self R\_\_\_\_\_ (respect)

1 Timothy 5:8

New International Version (NIV)

8 Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- Self Reliance is good and Self Respect is appropriate when it comes to things we CAN and SHOULD be doing for OURSELVES.
- But what about a situation where we have a NEED we CANNOT MEET and someone else is willing to pay FOR US? (Discussion) Do you ever struggle accepting help?
- This is another area I struggle in...asking for or accepting help when I need it.
- What about having that attitude when it comes to our SPIRITUAL CONDITION?

- When it comes to our SPIRITUAL CONDITION, if we say like a defiant child: "I can do it myself!" that's not SELF RELIANCE but SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- More importantly, it's SELF DELUSION...we're kidding ourselves...when it comes to RECONCILING WITH GOD and having ETERNAL LIFE...it can't be EARNED...it is a FREE GIFT.

Chuck Swindoll writes:

*The truth of the gospel is offensive to our pride. Pride suggests that enough goodness can substitute for belief in the Son of God. Faith requires a humble admission that we are helpless to redeem ourselves.*

- The new Jewish believers in the church at Rome no doubt struggled with this concept.
- They had been brought up in a LAW KEEPING religious culture where you EARN YOUR way to eternal life through GOOD WORKS. "I can do it myself!"
- Paul is writing to say: "No, you CAN'T"
- "But, Paul...you can't mean SALVATION is a FREE GIFT to me PAID FOR BY JESUS!"
- Paul responded in verse 28 of Chapter 3

28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

- You see, Paul is building an argument to deal with all the questions he knows these Jewish believers in the church at Rome were struggling with.
- Paul then deals with another struggle these Jewish believers had: What about Gentiles?
- Verse 29, Paul knows what they would ask, he writes:
- 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? (Paul answers his own question) Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.
- When Paul writes: "...only one God," he's referring to something every Israelite had been taught from childhood...their great CONFESSION from Deut. 6:4-5. The Shema.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

New International Version (NIV)

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.[a] 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

If there is ONE GOD and if ALL HAVE SINNED and ALL NEED SALVATION, then YES, Jehovah is the ONE GOD for both Jews and Gentiles.

- Next question Paul anticipates the Jewish believers asking. Verse 31:
- 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?
- Are you saying that the Gospel message CANCELS the 10 Commandments? Paul says:
- "Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." Christ didn't cancel the law, he FULFILLS it!
- Now we move to chapter 4

- Question: In America today, 235 years after the founding of our country, why do people still refer to "the founding fathers"? Why do we care what they intended when they wrote the constitution for example?
- Who was Israel's "founding father"? Father Abraham
- Paul knew using Abraham as an example would RESONATE with them. Look at Chapter 4:

## Romans 4

### Abraham Justified by Faith

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. 3 What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”[a]

4 Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. 5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

Footnotes:

Romans 4:3 Gen. 15:6; also in verse 22

- Did you catch that? The founder of the Jewish nation didn't EARN God's righteousness...he BELIEVED GOD and it was credited (PUT ON HIS ACCOUNT)
- Father Abraham RECEIVED GOD'S FREE GIFT of salvation.
- Paul goes on...jump to verse 16

## Romans 4:16-25

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16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”[a] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

- Verse 16: "the promise" is not only by FAITH but also by GRACE. Unmerited favor.
- That term "the promise" is interesting.
- Abraham BELIEVED GOD and it was CREDITED TO HIM as RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- But, Jesus hadn't yet come and died and been resurrected.

R.C. Sproul said:

*Abraham's faith looked forward and our faith looks backward, but the ground of Abraham's justification was exactly the same as ours, namely, the person and work of Jesus.*

- If Abraham had faith, how much faith did Abraham have? Verse 18:

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>[b]</sup> 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

- Abraham was a 100 year old man with a 90 year old wife who had always been barren.
- For Abraham to believe God when he said "you will be the father of many nations" took awesome FAITH!
- Verse 20 says "he did not waver through unbelief...but was strengthened through faith and gave glory to God."
- By the way, if a 100 year old man and his 90 year old barren wife have a child who would get the CREDIT and GLORY? Only God!
- Then Paul connects the dots for these Jewish believers in Rome about Abraham's FAITH and THEIR FAITH (and OUR FAITH):

23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Chuck Swindoll again:

*For centuries, the truth of God’s grace had been obscured by the clutter of Greek philosophy and Jewish traditions, both of which taught, essentially, “God helps those who help themselves.” Every good Jew spent his or her life trying to achieve the “righteousness of God” by carefully obeying His laws and meticulously observing His rituals. Many taught that Christianity was merely a continuation of that pursuit—a new life made possible by the atonement of Christ, which one joined by following Him in obedience to the Father. So Paul’s declaration, “A [person] is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (3:28), sounded like a radically new doctrine, especially to Jewish people.*

Eternal life is a FREE GIFT that can't be EARNED. It's comes by FAITH in Christ.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- What do you want us to do with this lesson?
- If you've never accepted this FREE GIFT of salvation through SIMPLE FAITH in Christ, I pray that you will pull one of us aside this morning and do it TODAY.
- For those of us who have already accepted this FREE GIFT of salvation by grace and through faith, I hope this lesson EQUIPS us even more to tell others: YOU DON'T HAVE TO EARN ETERNAL LIFE...in fact, YOU CAN'T. It was paid for by Christ and it's a FREE gift to all who TRUST HIM