

Justified By God's Provision

Romans 4:1-8

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Introduction: In Romans, God is offering Christ as the only solution to the unrighteousness of men. "Only" is the key word! He is not calling men to add faith in Christ to the religious works or to their own morality. Faith in Christ cannot be a part of what men do to get themselves to heaven. Christ must replace all those things. Saving Faith trusts **only** in Christ and consciously rejects all other hope of salvation. This has been God's argument, made through Paul's reasoning in the first three chapters of Romans.

In Chapter One God insists He is known to all men, but they do not honor Him as God. When they persist in this resistance, God eventually lets them do whatever they please without restraint, but He will still judge them for their sin.

In Chapter Two God explains that even those who recognize God and condemn sin in others still have sin of their own. No matter how good you think you are, it will not be good enough to get into heaven. The condemnation of others only reveals that you know that your own sin is worthy of condemnation. In the end...God says He.....

Romans 2:6 ⁶ ... WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS

Chapter three concludes that both the pagan and the religious person all have a sin problem. It is of the heart and springs from the fallen nature of mankind. There is no outward remedy. Using the Jewish religion as his example Paul says...

Romans 2:28-29 ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

All Jews, and we could say Christians in our day, have the unspeakable advantage of having the very Word of God. But that alone will not save us. Every man is a sinner by nature and action...

Romans 3:10 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

But as certainly as there is no human solution for sin, there is a divine one. God has revealed a righteousness that is offered to all mankind apart from religion, race or human standing. This righteousness does not have anything to do with the Law of God given to the Jews.

Romans 3:21-22 ²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Self righteousness is totally unacceptable to God. Paul said this about his own righteousness and standing before God.

Philippians 3:4-9 ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-

Chapter three concludes with this pivotal truth....

Romans 3:28-30 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. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

God's way of Salvation was never through man's morality, good works or even the observance of God's Own Law. Racial standing will not save you...not even having the Word of God and reading it. Only the perfectly righteous life and death of Jesus is acceptable to God. No human therefore can be righteous in God's sight. BUT...and this is huge.....When a man or women puts their trust in the righteous life of Christ as their only hope of salvation, God will justify them on that basis and never on any other.

Romans 3:23-25 ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

God wants the Jews and Gentiles alike to know that salvation has always been offered on exactly the same basis and it has always been available to all men. Free salvation apart from the Law does not nullify the Law but affirms it. Salvation through faith alone existed before The Law of God and is still the only way to obtain righteousness from God. To prove this God's Word appeals to Abraham in Chapter Four.

Romans 4:1-8 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 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 CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. ⁸ "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

How were men saved in the Old Testament? The most common belief is....by keeping the commandments or Law of God. But this cannot be true...

Romans 3:19-20 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

The reveals the righteousness of God to be sure!!! BUT...knowing God's righteousness and being righteous yourself are vastly different. So let's consider Abraham's salvation. Here are the main points from our text this morning....

- Abraham found Salvation by faith. [1-3]
- Abraham's faith was not a work [4-5]
- David also Rejoiced in Works Free Salvation [6-8]

Abraham found Salvation by faith. [1-3]

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? [1]: The use of "what then" is pointing back to what Paul has just asserted. He has said that justification through Faith Alone in Christ Alone establishes the Law and DOES NOT nullify it. He is going to discuss the historical founder of the Jewish race in order to prove his assertion that the Law cannot bring salvation and never did!

Abraham was not a Jew. He was a man of Ur, a city near the mouth of the Euphrates river in what is now Iraq or Kuwait. There was no Israel and now Jewish people when God decided unilaterally to create a people from this one man. Abraham was the forefather of all Jews "according to the flesh" or their human ancestry. So here is a man revered by all Jews as a holy and saved man....but He was not a Jew. He lived 600 years before Moses, The giving of the law, the feasts, the sacrifices, the priesthood and the establishing of Israel as a nation in the world. Abraham had none of these things. So...what did such a man find when it came to justification and salvation?

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. [2]: The Jews of Christ's day saw Abraham as a perfect man. Jewish scholars have said "no one has been found like him in glory...who did not sin against God." And, "we find that Abraham had performed the whole Law before it was given." This was the kind of thing that Jews believed and that Paul himself was taught. The Law is able to justify you when you keep it! If this were true then Abraham should take credit for his own salvation, just the way Jews and many self righteous and religious people do.

For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." [3]: But Paul was a preacher of God's Word and goes there over and over again to make his points about Jesus. God's Word in Paul's day consisted of the books of the Old Testament. Jews considered them holy and authoritative so Paul would preach out of them. The Jewish Scripture said exactly the same thing about Abraham that Paul is saying about all men. They need

righteousness that is outside themselves. A gift of righteousness...a credit line of righteousness upon which to draw.

Genesis 15:6 ⁶ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

So what did Abraham, who lived before the law, discover about righteousness? That it was a gift from God based solely on trust. There were now commandments to keep, no sacrifices to offer and no rituals to observe. Abraham for all intents and purposes was like any gentile living at the time of Christ and Paul...YET God justified him through Faith Alone. Abraham did not need the Law to be Justified and neither do men today. In fact...at the risk of sounding repetitious..."by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight."

Abraham's faith was not a work [4-5]

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

[4]: This is a common belief in Christianity today as well. It sees faith as our part to do. Our work to perform. How many times have you heard someone say..."you need to have faith!" The Jew of Paul's day believed that faith was one of many works a man must do to be right with God. It was certainly not enough by itself. The Jewish scholar Schoeps says "faith becomes a zealous obedience in the matter of fulfilling the law and its individual prescriptions." The Catholic Churches teaches that God trades salvation for the observance of the Sacraments and calls that being "of the Faith." Seventh Day Adventist believe that men must abandon Sunday worship and embrace the Sabbath again in order to be saved. They have gone so far as to call Sunday worship the "mark of the beast."

God's Word does not accept faith as a work to do. It is apart from all works in the following way. God will not give you salvation if you will have faith anymore that a parent will give life to their child if they will just believe. Unconceived children and spiritually dead people cannot believe anything or trust in anything. What both need is for someone to give them life based on no merit or work of their own.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

It categorically states that God saved us by grace and not by faith. Faith is the immediate result of God's Grace because now we are seeing God. We are alive to God and therefore believe fully in God. But until God acts in Grace no man will possess faith. The reason you have faith is because God has shown you grace.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

So when Paul argues that the man who works gets what he is due, we have to remember everything he has shown about the heart of mankind in the previous three chapters. What

is due us is death and condemnation. What we need is Grace...we need undeserved favor from the God of Creation. No works will be sufficient to save us...They were not for Abraham.

But to the one who does not work, , , [5]: Now the contrasting truth. If a man does not work and yet someone pays him everyday what would you call that? A favor? A kindness? A mercy? Could we call it Grace? Perhaps you are thinking of all these able bodied men standing in Placerville begging these days. What are they doing to earn that money that people give them? Nothing! It is a favor that someone gives to them. If they got what was do them they would have nothing and would starve. They believe that someone will help them even if they do not work. How a hard working man feels about an able bodied beggar is how the Jews felt about Jesus offering salvation to prostitutes and thieving tax collectors. They had their own hard earned righteousness and they resented those who had not worked for any of theirs.

But would you feel differently if some man or woman absolutely could not work? If they were unable, in any way to work for what they so desperately needed? Yes that would change our attitude toward them. This is what Jesus knew about all men: They are sinners from the womb. They either pretend that there is no God or they decide that they are good enough for God to receive into heaven. Neither are true and all men are in one category or the other.

But believes in Him who justifies the ungodly [5b]: This is at the heart of Paul's assertion that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin and therefore in need of a Salvation that neither can work for. God justifies the ungodly! The ungodly do not justify themselves! And all men are ungodly...even the self-righteous. All men have sinned! This faith requires...demands that we see ourselves as ungodly. This is something that the self-righteous man will simply never do. They will add faith to their righteousness but they will never, ever admit to themselves, others or to God that they are ungodly sinners in need of God's remedy for them. But...anyone who believes in God to do for them what they can never do for themselves has saving faith.

His faith is credited as righteousness: When a man has this kind of faith he receives righteousness that is not His. It is deposited or accounted to him. The actual idea behind the word "credited" is to move it over into the column under your name. It is now in your possession or account. Did you earn it? Absolutely not! Do you possess it? Absolutely yes!

So let's review... Does the Gospel nullify the Law or uphold it? It upholds it because God gave the law to reveal His righteousness but never gave it as a means to possess His righteousness. This men are simply not able to do. They are by nature sinners and they delude themselves with religion and with self-righteous moralism. When the preaching of the Cross points this out it does not nullify the Law but affirms its true purpose.

Abraham lived 600 years before God gave the Law and yet God justified him by faith. Abraham believed God. He trusted God and not himself. Abraham was a great man, but still a sinner. Abraham was not looking for God....God came looking for him, and called him, and justified him.

Faith is not a work that we do! It is simple trust in the God who works for us. God is not our project as believers....we are His. We need to get low and stay there before our God. Yes He is our Savior and He loves us, but we have received everything from Him. If you are trying now to prove this statement wrong you are treading where the self-righteous tread. Neither salvation nor the works we do are our doing. Neither are

Ephesians 2:9-10 ⁹ a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

David rejoiced in works free Salvation [6-8]

David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works [6]: 900 years later, after Moses, The Law, The sojourn in Egypt and the conquest of the land...David was called by God and anointed King of Israel.

Question: Did God know that David was a sinner by nature and that he would commit the sins of lying, murdering and adultery with Bathsheba? Why did He call him then? Why did God promise David that his throne would endure into eternity and that the Messiah would be his descendent and the Eternal King?

Because these are the only kind of men God has to work with. They are all fallen sinners unable to save themselves through righteous works. Those who think they can remain lost and unconverted and in the end pay the penalty for their own sins in full. They fall squarely into the category of those Scripture describes this way....

Romans 2:5-6 ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS

David experienced undeserved grace from God and He knew it. Scripture never excuses sin! It is never alright to commit sin, but the reality is that we have, we do and we will. IT always leaves consequences in its wake. What Abraham experienced David also discovered. God forgives sins apart from our works of righteousness. David broke every Law of God and yet was justified by God apart from the Law.

2 Samuel 12:13-14 ¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. [7]: When David wrote Psalm 32 he was overwhelmed with the grace and mercy of God toward wicked sinners. As Nathan so succinctly put it...You are that man!

God forgives Lawless Deeds. God covers sins. David knew that there was at that point nothing he would ever be able to do to reverse the sins he had committed. He was unrighteous before God and he knew it. The religious Jew of Christ's day acknowledged

no need. And to be fair they probably had not acted as badly as David, but they had sin. They had lied and dishonored their parents. Jesus confronted them over and over again on their hypocrisy

Matthew 23:23 ²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Matthew 23:26-28 ²⁶ "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Was David a sinner? Absolutely! But he knew he could not justify himself by works. There was not enough hours in the day or days in the year. He would have to receive the gift of Justification as a gift.

"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." [8]: Earlier I said that God takes the righteousness of Christ and puts into an accounting column in our account. Now He takes David's sin, Abraham's sin and yours and moves them out of your account. Should they be there for God to see on that final judgment day? Yes! But they are now gone.

How is it right that God should over look sin this way? That men can do the most hideous things and then just go to heaven is a stumbling block to those who do not acknowledge their own sin. BUT...God does not overlook your sin. God is too holy too overlook your sin. He is too just to act like we never did it. SO...where is your sin when you have come to Christ? God has not erased it in His ledger! He has moved it. The books will still balance. Every deed will be accounted for, but you will not account for it.

Isaiah 53:6 ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused **the iniquity of** us all To fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:10-11 ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

CONCLUSION: God justifies us by faith alone because it is the only way you can be justified. All men are incapable of righteousness. This does not mean that all men are equally bad or that all men commit all sins. Not at all. But that is the snare. God's righteousness is perfect and undiluted. He cannot be defiled by our sin and "all have sinned!"

So God the Father and Son, put into motion the most incredible plan to save you. The Son would leave the throne of God and become a baby human. He would live the life you should have lived and die the death you should have died. And if you trust Him Alone for that you will be saved. This is Saving Faith. It is not faith as a work. God does not trade faith for salvation. He gives faith to trust Him Alone. This justification is by Faith alone, in Christ alone and is given by Grace Alone. God acted to save men. We do not act. We put our trust solely in Him. The Jews felt certain they were saved because they were sons of Abraham...God says Abraham's salvation is the possession of those who trust God alone for their salvation.

Galatians 3:6-14 ⁶ Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ⁷ Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." ¹² However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"-- ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.