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Begin Romans 4 this evening. We have as our portion, the first four verses. These are the words of God. What then shall we say that Abraham? Our father Has found according to the flesh. For if Abraham was justified by works. He has something to boast about. But not before God.

For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him, who works the wages are not counted. This grace. But is debt.

So far the reading of God's inspired and And Aaron Tort One of the things that was offensive in. Chapter 2 when we were considering, Man, and has complete lostness before God. Is that there were some at least among Israel who despite their complete laws lostness having their church membership, having the law of God and knowledge of it was something that that actually led to their boasting.

And all boasting, of course, is Offensive. We all know that we've all experienced it in others. We have even experienced it in ourselves. Having had a boastful thought and our heart and mind were approaching us before God or having spoken, boastfully in conversation, and then reviewing later in our minds.

How we sounded, even to ourselves? Let alone? To another. And so it was one of the great glories of the gospel that whereas the law had provoked boasting. Weakened as it was by our flesh by our sinfulness, the gospel has actually excluded it And, This is just one of many glories of the gospel.

It's the one. With which chapter 3 was closing. And, Then the question that chapter 4 has just begun with as we have just heard it. Red is what then shall we say that Abraham? Our Father has found According to the flesh. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about and so on.

And so the, the question then really is is boasting excluded for all believers. What about Abraham? What about father, Abraham? The one who a connection to him was so highly esteemed. That when Jesus was arguing with the Pharisees or instructing the Pharisees and they were arguing within That when Jesus was in, A was instructing the Pharisees.

They insisted that Abraham was their father. What about Abraham Does he have something to boast about? Now we have to be careful. Because, If Abraham's our father. Than perhaps if he has something to boast about, then we Have something to boast about. At least that's the That's the way that Jews were tempted to think.

And so, The question. What then shall we say that Abraham? Our father Has found according to the flesh. And so the question is, and what way is he, your father, Is he your father? According to the flesh? Therefore, you have pride as an Israelite, a biological descendant. Of Abraham.

Is he your father according to the flesh? Perhaps not as a biological descendant, but as someone who thinks that spiritual things are found in the flesh, Who makes much of the cutting

of circumcision for instance, which is something that that occurs in the flesh or Is Abraham our father by faith, which the Apostle will get to later on in the chapter.

That he's the father of all the circumcised to believe Not so much the circumcised don't believe. And of all the uncircumcised who believe. So what then shall we say that Abraham? Our father has found according to the flesh. And, One of the things that will consider first then from these four verses is that Abraham himself is an example of flesh.

And also later in faith. But he begins as an example of flesh. The second place, we'll see that. Even if he was justified by works, he would not be able to boast before God. And we see that, of course, in verse 2. And then in verses 3 and 4.

Takes the hypothetical question and he puts it to the scriptural test. And the hypothetical situation. That Abraham was justified by works. Turns out to be false. There's not justified. By works, as the answer from Genesis 15:6. As verses 3 and 4 tonight, show us. So first, then what then shall we say?

That Abraham. Our father has found according to the flesh. If he is our Father, what does that mean for us as His children? And the answer is you get your flesh from Abraham. If he's your father but you can't get your faith. From Abraham. This is something that we who are Christian, parents are hopefully very aware of and that our children learn as They need instruction and often they need correction.

And they're disciplined, and hopefully part of our discipline with our children is praying with them and praying for them. It does a child. Much good to hear his father pleading with God. Knowing that his child received his fleshlyness from me. The doubt. But he cannot receive faith from me.

The dad. He must receive his faith as a gift from God. And so for a father to be pouring out his heart, And especially the Father. Because the father is the federal representative, That's why Jesus had to be born of a virgin mother. And crying out before, God. Oh Lord, have mercy on this child of mine.

Who is a sinner because they are my child. And I cannot give them faith but you owe God. Have loved sinners. You've given your son for me. And for my child, you gave me faith. In your Son that I might be made righteous in him. That my sin might be forgiven and now my child has just sinned again because he is a sinner because she is a sinner who has come from a sinful father Will you not?

In mercy, according to your promise, according to the love in which you gave Christ. Also now, Give my child. Repentance and faith by your Holy Spirit. So that We feel. The reality of our children's getting fleshlyness from us. And we know the privilege. Of being appointed by God as the one in whom our children are counted, holy and set apart in His church and especially the ones through whom they receive most of the exercise in the means of God's grace.

So that he's put them in our house and he's given us the word and he's given us prayer. And he's put then by putting them in our house in His household on earth and He's given them the Word and baptism and prayer and even before they eat and drink at the table, he's given them.

The supper where the Lord's death is shown forth unto them by all, who eat and all who drink. So that they will see over and over again that the God who gave me this. Fleshly father. From whom I have received my fleshliness and I am a sinner like he is.

Is the God who has put me in his house of faith. And from him alone, not from my dad, not from my mom. But from God alone, May I receive This faith. And so there's this question. What then shall we say that Abraham? Our father has found according to the flesh because what he finds according to the flesh is what we can find from him according to the flesh.

If we are has children. According to the flesh. The answer of course, what does anyone get? According to the flesh. We get sin. That's what Abraham got. Isn't that what Joshua says to the children of Israel? At the end of the book of Joshua? And he's giving them his farewell address and he reminds them of that God's great mercy to them.

Didn't start with the two and a half. Tribes land on the east side of the Jordan when Moses was still alive. God's mercy to them. Certainly didn't start when they crossed the Jordan. And now Joshua was on his own. And leading them in the conquest of Of the promised Land.

That God's mercy to them as a nation actually started with Father, Abraham and grandfather Tara. And before he began. They were idolaters. In her of the Chaldees. That's what Abraham had according to the flesh. It was idolatry and sin from which he needed to be redeemed by the grace of God, that chose him and set him apart.

And, That gave him faith. And so, What did Abraham find? According to the flesh Four, if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about it. So just supposing for a moment. Just supposing and it is just for a moment because verses 3 and 4 are going to say There wasn't actually the case.

It wasn't justified by works. But supposing for a moment that Abraham was justified by works. That the thing that made the difference between Abraham Who was saved who was righteous and someone who wasn't saved. Who wasn't righteous was that Abraham made a better choice. He would have something to boast about.

He'd be able to say, well, Everything between me and that guy. That is the same God did the same for each of us. But I made a good choice. And that man didn't make a good choice. And therefore, I'm saved. In other words to speak anachronistically out of correct time order Abraham was the first Armenian, If he has something to boast about, But even the Armenian doesn't have something to boast about before God.

Because God who gave me and that guy all the same stuff, still gave me everything I have My life, my breath, my mind, the knowledge of the gospel, the ability to choose Even the Armenian doesn't get out of that. He just says, God got us all up to the same starting line.

And then maybe the finish line, then I ran across the finish. And, This poor wretched fellow over here who received all the same grace. You may have heard the phrase Provenient graces, especially Doctrine teaching. From John Wesley, It's awful thing. But we had all the same things. So if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about But not before God.

You see? Even if he is, Getting better than that guy deserves. Because by comparison, you deserves it. He's not getting better than he deserves before God. God gave them everything. Now think about it, even in the hypothetical situation where justification is by work, where faith is a work. And I can boast next to that guy.

But I can't boast before God, which one of those two things. Should govern how I think. And how I feel, which which should be more more prominent in my mind on? In the front of my mind. Is that how we relate to the other fellow over here? Or is it how I relate to the living?

God. The answer which corrects and rebukes, all of us is it should be how we relate to God. Who's more significant? The Living God or the people around you. But don't we generally Compare ourselves to the people around us. And aren't we generally? All to forgetful of the Lord before, whose face we live.

So even in the hypothetical situation where I have something to most about if I would just get which one is the bigger deal, right? It would still take away my boasting. Because I would be more mindful of the fact that I have nothing to post about before God that he has been merciful to me.

And the same thing that excludes the boasting.

The praise and Thanksgiving of God. Would be excluding my boasting and I wouldn't have room. For this. This lateral, horizontal comparison. Between me. And the man next to me, So, the logic precludes the boasting. But logic and the law are both what? Weakened by. Flesh. Thankfully. Justification is not.

By works at all. So, he considers this hypothetical. Now, having answered even in the hypothetical situation, he has nothing to boast about before God first two. But the hypothetical turns out not to be true. For what does the scripture say Abraham believed God. And it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Now, there's a Baptist preacher in Minnesota who calls himself reformed. And has written a book recently on how treasuring Christ is part of faith. And that is a very significant error. Treasuring Christ, as part of repentance. Treasuring him is a work. Loving him is a work. Apprehending his value is a work.

Apprehending, God's mercy in him is a work. Now, of course. As you receive and rest upon Christ alone for the gospel. You're doing so because he is infinitely, worthy. Because he is worthy of all your treasuring. And the faith and the repentance are never separated. But it is very important as we see here in these two verses.

And we will continue to see again, very strongly. And next week's, passage Lord willing. That we not consider any part of the exercise of our will the exercise of our affections. But as part of our faith in Jesus Christ, Faith. Is not. A work. And so he says, what does the scripture say Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, okay?

That's the text. Of Genesis 15 verse 6 that he's paying attention to And now he brings these two possibilities either. This believing is a work. And if this believing is a work, then the righteousness that you get from this believing is paid as a wage is paid as a debt, It's an obligation.

When my daughter receives her paycheck, she doesn't think. Oh, my employer has been so gracious to me that they gave me this known The employer, if they didn't pay it. Would. Would be liable before the law and liable before. God. Who says that, if who says that if you have a poor person, Now, my daughter is very poor.

Well, not generally in comparison to the rest of the world history. But if you have a person and you don't pay them that evening before they go to bed, You have failed to pay your obligation. So that's, that's one way that we might think that faith works. And, The servant of God who's preaching his word to you.

Right now used to think like that when he was a child He grew up. I think being taught that I hope not. But at least that's what I got in church was, I couldn't do all of these other works. But, because Believing gets Jesus. God is so happy with my believing.

That he accepts it instead. Of all of that perfect obedience. It's so close to the gospel. It's half, right? But it's all wrong. God isn't happy with my believing. He's happy with Jesus. And he gives me the faith to join me to Jesus. So that I and his son in Union.

Will have not only his payments to put away all of the debt of my sin, but His righteousness. To be all of my righteous standing before God. Now, do I find the God who has done that and the God who has come in the person of the Son and obeyed in my place and died in my place and risen again on account of my justification.

Do I find him worthy? In the is the resting and emotionless resting. No, it's not. It is a grateful, loving adoring, resting that values Christ more than anything else. But that gratitude and that love, and that adoration, and that valuing is not. The resting. The nature of rest is that it doesn't do anything.

Faith. Is not. A work. And you get that in one word from Genesis 15:6. Credited. Or accountant, or reckoned. But didn't pay me righteousness, as a wage when I believed. He counted it for me as a gift. The way sometimes. You know. Children. I am my children's bank. I received that honor by paying them an interest rate, they can't get at any other bank.

And, If I were just to go into the spreadsheet, And, Edit the balance. Not the agreed upon interest just Add some, you know, putting the note line Because daddy decided to love you today. The righteousness that faith receives is not. A wage debt. It is. A gift of grace, It is a reckoning that God gives a legally.

It's theirs. It's yours. Every bit as much as if you had obeyed. But even more. Than if you had obeyed. You'll see as we consider reasons that it's important. First of all, if faith was a work and we indebted God by believing if he owed us righteousness. For our believing, then we would have something to boast about before God.

It would undo this glory of the gospel that has excluded boasting. The faith was a work. But it's not a work. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. Need a good doctrine of Scripture. Where the vocabulary matters. Where a one particular word in one particular verse. Can carry the weight.

Of such a glorious and significant doctrine. Another reason that is important. And we already reviewed this to to a certain extent, it helps us in our ongoing Christian life. So that we don't confuse faith with repentance. Because one thing you and I are still doing is we are still sinning.

And if God is being merciful to us, and we have not Quenched the spirit and seared our consciences. Than our sin, still reminds us of what it deserves. And we feel the hell guilt of our sin. When the Spirit. Pricks. Our consciousness. Brings to our attention when we're reading the Bible.

Which is not a dead letter on a page, but is living an active. And what does it do? As a living and active word? It reveals to us the thoughts and tensions of our arts. And so I'm constantly needing again the assurance of the forgiveness of God and Jesus Christ.

Well, how are we? Forgiven, How are we made righteous before God, It's by faith alone and not repentance at all. Which is a great help. When you're realizing for the 10,000th time in your Christian, walk that the way you have been living the last hour, the thing that you have just

spoken to your husband, or your wife or your child, the the slouching that you are were just now inclined to do into something, lazier, find comfort in the flesh instead of comfort in the Lord.

That these things deserve hell. You need to be clear on the difference between faith and repentance and which one is the instrument through which you're made righteous. Because your temptation is going to be. To think. I mean it so much this time. Christ is so worthy. Is different than, I treasure him so much right now.

Because you and I will look back at all of those imperfect. Treasuries, And trustings and loving's and adorings. And in those moments, we'll know. That couldn't make me righteous. And so faith. Abandons. Any hope in itself? It says, I know I don't treasure Christ like I should But none can be lost to our His Have mercy on me.

God, for the sake. Of your Son. And his righteousness and His sacrifice. And the love in which you gave him. I rest on him alone, as he is offered to me in the gospel. And I dare not rest in my resting.

You know, this makes your righteous standing before God infinitely more. Sure. Doesn't it. If it's something that God has done in Christ, If it's something that Christ has done, And if the believing is not a matter of How much you rest in Him? But the fact that you have abandoned all other hope but Him And that he is the only hope you have.

Because if he's the one doing it, it's sure. And if you come back the 10,000th time, And he's the one who has done it and he is the one who is doing it. It's still short. And you can come. Repenting of that sin with all of your imperfect repentance and saying, Even the repentance and perfect as it is.

Couldn't have come from me. But it's not the repenting that makes me right before. God. It's the one who's given me, whatever repenting I have. Because it's only what he has done.

I hope your children that As you grow. In grace, you don't go through some of the things. That I have. Experienced myself or helped others through. Sin that just doesn't seem to let you go. If you get to a place like that in your Christian life or you are in a place like that in your Christian life.

Knowing that Christ alone. And what he has done alone is what makes you right before. God will be invaluable to you. And your ability to repent. Is actually going to proceed from that faith. Because your love for him will respond to what he has done. So, it's very important.

That we Get it right. And good news. Not as good as the gospel, but it does come in the Providence of God. If you happen to, Be a child. Whose memorizing? The shorter. Catechism. You will be able to do better than lifelong. Pastor theologians Who talked themselves into bad books?

What is faith in Jesus Christ? Faith in. Jesus Christ is a saving grace. Whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel. What is repentance unto life? Repentance unto life is a saving grace. Whereby a sinner out of a true sense of His sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ.

Dust with grief and hatred of his sin turned from it unto God. With full purpose of and endeavor after New. Obedience.

You see the apprehension of God's mercy, and the hatred of your sin and all of those things, those are part of your repentance. It's not a work. Those are not the things for which you are counted righteous. If they were, it would be a debt, it would be a wage.

But Abraham was accounted righteous. You can add through faith because that's the nature of faith. It's that word accounted here. That matters. That is the point. He was accounted righteous. For the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you will be too. You abandon all other hope. Hope only.

Amen.