

Message #16

Romans 4:13-25

The most important question any person may ask is what must I do to be forgiven of all of my sins so when I die I go to heaven? There is no question more important than this one. Now the man that God singled out to give a careful answer to that question was the Apostle Paul. Jesus Christ specifically revealed to Paul the answer to what a person must do to have all of their sins forgiven and receive the righteousness of God.

Here is what Paul taught: **“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (*Jesus Christ*) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him (*Jesus Christ*) everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).**

What an amazing message. If a person will believe in Jesus Christ, he will be set free and forgiven all of his/her sins and will be given the righteousness of God that will take them to heaven.

Now you would think that people in this world would shout Hallelujah to that message. You would think that people would say Praise God. But that didn't happen, when Paul preached it. When Paul gave that wonderful message to those people in Antioch, the religious people who were proud of their works and law and religion so persecuted Paul and Barnabas that they chased them out of town (Acts 13:50-51).

You see religious people are proud. Most think they measure up to the standard of God's righteousness by their works or by their efforts to keep the O.T. law.

If you don't believe that, go to some religious person and tell them that the only way to have sins forgiven is by faith in Jesus Christ. See where that gets you.

The biggest enemy against the justification by faith message is the pride of people.

- 1) People are proud of their human works.
- 2) People are proud of their religious works.
- 3) People are proud of their religious law keeping.
- 4) People are proud of their religious rituals.

Paul blasts that kind of thinking right here. What Paul says here is this:

NO ONE WILL EVER HAVE THEIR SINS FORGIVEN OR HAVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD BY KEEPING RELIGIOUS LAW OR BY THEIR WORKS BECAUSE GOD WILL ONLY CALCULATE ONE AS RIGHTEOUS WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS CHRIST.

You will discover most people really don't believe that. Most people believe they are right with God by their church works, their O.T. law keeping, their baptism, their religious rituals and catechism and by following religious traditions that have been invented by men. Religion is the broad way to eternal destruction and faith in Jesus Christ is a very narrow way of salvation and few find it or believe it.

There are four main themes that Paul develops in these verses:

- 1) Faith Credited Righteousness;
- 2) Works Guilt;
- 3) O.T. Law condemnation;
- 4) Grace salvation.

In this text there are four critical theological points that Paul makes:

THEOLOGICAL POINT #1 – God's promise of future eternal blessing was not via O.T. law, but was by Faith credited righteousness. **4:13**

Now the promise that Paul specifically has in mind concerning Abraham in **verse 13** was the promise that the Messiah, who would one day take over the world, would come through Abraham's lineage.

What Paul is saying here is that God's promise of future eternal blessing to Abraham never came by an O.T. law righteousness; it came by a credited faith righteousness.

The O.T. law had nothing to do with the promise that God gave to Abraham. His works had nothing to do with the promise God made to Abraham for at least three reasons:

Reason #1 - The O.T. law wasn't even given when the Promise was made. It would come about 500 years later. So his righteousness could not have been based on O.T. law.

Reason #2 - Abraham was a sinner by his works - he doubted God; disbelieved God; he lied and committed adultery. So his righteousness was not based on his works.

Reason #3 - God's word says Abraham was justified by faith. Genesis 15:6

Abraham's works or the O.T. law had nothing to do with God's promise of righteousness that would come through a future descendant. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteous.

Abraham's works had nothing to do with it and neither did his attempts to keep the O.T. law. James 2:10 says if one is guilty of breaking just one commandment, one is guilty of breaking all of them. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say, "there is no such thing as a moderate or partial sinner." We have all broken God's law and we are all sinners.

God has the record of everything in our life. He has the record of every failure and every sin. God has the total and complete record both before we believed and even after we believe. So do you really think that God's promise of us going to heaven is going to be determined by our works or by our trying to keep the O.T. law? Why did Jesus Christ die? He died to give us a righteousness that we could not earn or deserve. When we believe in Him we are saved.

THEOLOGICAL POINT #2 – God's grace promise is invalidated if it is by the O.T. law. **4:14**

The conjunction “for” that begins **verse 14** explains what happens to the grace salvation by faith message if one thinks he can be right with God by keeping the O.T. law. Two realities:

Reality #1 - The grace/faith system is made void.

That word “void” (kenow) is one that means to make empty or to make of no effect (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 244).

The point is if one thinks the O.T. law and their works are going to save them, they are basically saying that the faith system God has structured is empty and of no effect or value.

Reality #2 - The grace/faith promise system is nullified.

This word “nullify” is a favorite of Paul. That word “nullified” (katargew) means to make something invalid, inoperative and abolished (*Ibid.*, p. 238).

The point is if one thinks that one can be right with God by the O.T. law, one completely dismantles and abolishes the grace-faith-promise system.

This is important. **The vast majority of religious people in this world are actually telling God His system of salvation means nothing.**

There are those who say we will really save ourselves by keeping the Sabbath.

There are those who say we will really save ourselves by our baptism.

There are those who say we will really save ourselves by our keeping the O.T. Law.

There are those who say we will really save ourselves by our own works.

They are attacking God's grace, faith system of salvation. They are invalidating the whole system. This is not just a matter of religious difference; this is an attack against God and the grace system. That is the way God saw it and that is what Paul writes here.

THEOLOGICAL POINT #3 – God's condemnatory wrath is produced by the Law, not grace salvation. **4:15**

Understand this point: no works of the O.T. law can make a sinner righteous in the sight of God. No sinful human can keep the O.T. law and end up with God saying you have My righteousness.

- 1) **Romans 3:28** - "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."
- 2) **Galatians 2:16** - "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."
- 3) **Galatians 3:11** - "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, the righteous man shall live by faith."

God's word cannot be any plainer on this point. No one can ever be right with God by trying to keep the O.T. law.

Well, then the question arises what is the purpose of the O.T. law? We have at least five direct statements from Paul as to the purpose of the O.T. Law in regard to salvation:

Statement #1 - The law was given to shut proud mouths. Rom. 3:19a

Statement #2 - The law was given to establish guilt. Rom. 3:19b

Statement #3 - The law was given to establish sin. Rom. 3:20

Statement #4 - The law was given to show we deserve God's wrath. **Rom. 4:15**

Statement #5 - The law was given to bring us to faith in Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:24

Now according to **Romans 4:15**, the O.T. law shows every one of us that we deserve God's wrath. That law shows us that we have deviated from God's righteous path and deserve the wrath of God. If we did not have the law, we would not be able to see our violations of it.

Let's see if we can illustrate the point. Commandment #10 says we shall not covet. The list of things given in Exodus 20:17 include someone's house, mate, person who has servants, his vehicles or anything that belongs to a neighbor. Now the moment we read that don't we honestly see we have missed the mark a time or two?

- 1) Have you ever driven by a mansion and thought, wish I lived there?
- 2) Have you ever seen a good looking husband or wife and thought I wish I had them?
- 3) Have you ever heard of a billionaire with servants and wished that were you?
- 4) Have you ever seen someone driving a car and wished it were yours?
- 5) Have you ever wished you had something someone else had-
you wished you had their athleticism; their income; their success?

The fact is they don't even need to be our neighbor. We covet people we don't know. Now if we don't have this in writing, we would not know that this is wrong. We would think it is just fine spending our life coveting what others have and striving for it rather than thankful for what we have.

THEOLOGICAL POINT #3 – God’s grace system always comes by faith. **4:16-22**

God’s grace faith system must come by faith and not works and not O.T. law. The preposition that begins **verse 16**, “for this reason” sets the stage for Paul’s last point. On account of the fact that righteousness cannot come by keeping the O.T. law, it must come by grace and by faith.

Paul really drives this point home in two ways:

Way #1 - The illustration of Abraham. **4:16-22**

There are three important truths that Paul brings out in this illustration:

(Truth #1) - Future promised blessings to Abraham were by God’s grace. **4:16**

How could a sinful man like Abraham be given a promise that in him all of the nations of the world would be blessed and that through him would come the Messiah? How would that be possible when he lied, had doubts and was an adulterer? The only answer is this is by God’s grace.

How can God promise any one of us heaven? We are not better than Abraham. In fact, Abraham is probably better than most of us. God knows the times we have failed Him, so how could He promise us heaven? By God’s grace.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote this:

“The promise came to Abraham, ‘I will bless thee...and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ ‘But, Lord’ Abraham might have said, ‘suppose I get out of Thy will?’ God replies ‘I will bless thee.’ Abraham might against ask, ‘But Lord, suppose my posterity should become idolators?’ God still replies: ‘I will make of thee a great nation’: And again Abraham might question, ‘But Lord, suppose that my descendants should crucify Thy Son?’ But God still replies ‘I will bless thee.’

We look at all the record and say, ‘Lord, suppose that Abraham becomes a liar, and teaches his wife to lie, and breaks whatever conditions there are to his place in the covenant?’ God replies ‘I will Bless thee.’ We ask, ‘but suppose his grandson, Jacob, becomes a crook?’ God answers ‘I will bless thee.’ We ask again, ‘But suppose his greatest son David, becomes an adulterer and murderer?’ God replies ‘I will bless thee.’ In a voice that is reduced to trembling, we ask, ‘But why Lord?’ And the answer comes, ‘Because I am the God who will through My servant one day write, ‘If we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself’ (II Tim. 2:13). And all we can say is, ‘But, Lord, this is grace without merit.’ And the Lord will reply, ‘Yes, this is indeed unmerited grace.’” **Future fulfilled promises demand God’s grace.**

(Truth #2) - Sovereign foreknowledge of Abraham’s future demanded God’s grace. **4:17**

Don’t miss what is said here. God knew the future of Abraham and told Abraham of his future before Abraham even had faith. God promised to bless Abraham before he was even counted or calculated as righteous. **Genesis 12:1-3 occurs some 10 years before Genesis 15:6.**

How could God promise to do so much for an unbeliever who was dead in trespasses and sins? God's salvation promise is not based on works but always based on grace. The fact that God foreknows our sins proves our salvation cannot possibly be by our works, but must be by God's grace.

(Truth #3) - Abraham's human condition demanded God's grace be solely by faith. **4:18-22**

There are four very extremely important facts brought out here about Abraham's salvation:

Fact #1 - Abraham had a faith that believed God's word. **4:18**

Abraham based what he believed on the word of God. He based what he believed on what God said, when God told him that he would produce a progeny when he was 100-years-old, he believed God. He did not ask for a sign or feeling. He took God at His word.

Why should we believe that by faith in Jesus Christ we will be saved? That is what God says.

Fact #2 - Abraham had a faith that did not trust in his dead works. **4:19**

This had to be by faith, not works. Abraham was almost 100-years-old and Sarah was nearly 90 (Gen. 17:17). When God told Abraham he would have a son, he never wavered in his faith; he believed God. He could not possibly trust in himself or his works to fulfill this.

Fact #3 - Abraham had a faith that trusted in the life promise of God. **4:20-21**

Abraham grew stronger and stronger in his faith that God would, in fact, grant him what He promised. An Abrahamic faith does not trust in self; it trusts completely in Jesus Christ to fulfill every promise of God.

Fact #4 - Abraham had a faith that God calculated him as being righteous. **4:22**

It was the faith system that caused God to declare Abraham righteous. Not works and not law.

Way #2 - The application to us. **4:23-25**

Don't miss these verses. Don't miss the conjunction "now" (**v. 23**). This is not just a nice story about Abraham; this is a story of how a person is justified.

Anyone who will believe in Jesus Christ will be credited with righteousness just like Abraham was.

There are five very important theological applications Paul makes here:

- 1) Righteousness that saves is by God's judicial calculation and crediting. **4:23-24a**
- 2) Righteousness that saves is by believing that God saves one who believes in Jesus Christ.
4:24
- 3) Righteousness that saves believes Jesus Christ was delivered up for us. **4:25a**
- 4) Righteousness that saves believes Jesus Christ was delivered because of our sins. **4:25b**
- 5) Righteousness that saves believes Christ's resurrection proves our justification. **4:25c**

God's salvation is all of grace. We don't deserve it and we cannot earn it. It is a package gift to one who believes.

So here is the question; are you going to let your stinking pride stand in the way of believing in Jesus Christ? Do you really think God has developed this grace salvation so you could trust in you? Humble yourself. Believe on Jesus Christ and God will give you His Son's righteousness and give you everlasting life.