

Subject: *God's Only Way to Be Justified*

Scripture: *Romans 4:1-8*

In Romans 3 Paul introduced the theme of justification by faith. We read for example in

Romans 3:28 *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Now as he moves into chapter 4 Paul illustrates this great truth by pointing to two outstanding men from the Old Testament, Abraham and David. In a very powerful and conclusive way Paul shows that this has been God's plan all along to justify sinners by faith.

Thomas Watson, one of the great Puritans, explained this important Bible term:

"Justification is an act of God's free grace whereby he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone." - Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

The truth about God and salvation is clear in the Bible, but this truth is always being attacked, undercut, and distorted. All false religions and cults, from primitive idol worship to more sophisticated religious systems, are based on some form of salvation of works. They teach that being right with God depends in whole or in part on what man does for God. The Bible is clear in its teaching that salvation is based on what God has done for man. We must know God's way for sinners to be justified in His sight and we must submit to God's way.

God's way for sinners to be justified is simple and satisfying, and most important, it is glorifying to God. Everything God does is for His glory, and nothing brings Him more glory than the salvation of sinners. That's why salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—because salvation is for the glory of God alone.

God's only way to be justified is found in the simple words of Romans 4:5, "God justifies the ungodly through faith." There has never been any other way of salvation.

1. WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS

Paul refers to Abraham our father (forefather). This was the claim of all Jews.

John 8:39 *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father.*

Paul used Abraham as the example of how a person is justified. The Jews regarded him as the supreme example of a righteous man, but they had come to believe that Abraham's righteousness was based on his good life and works. So Paul states in verse 2 in a hypothetical sense that if Abraham was justified by works then he could boast in God's presence. But that could never happen!

People have this tendency to think that righteousness is something they can achieve and this kind of self-righteousness always causes a sense of pride. Jesus told the story of the Pharisee and the publican (tax collector) in **Luke 18:9-14**.

Ephesians 2:8-9⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Titus 3:5 *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

2. WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

In verses 3-8 Paul takes us back to Scripture. That's what Paul always did. That's what Jesus did. The Bible is the absolute authority and the final word. Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Then he quotes David from Psalm 32:1-2. Since Abraham and David are such well known and respected men in the Bible we may think that God honored their faith because they were such "good" men. That is to miss the point entirely. Faith is not an expression of human goodness. It is an expression of human need. Faith is not something that God rewards because it has merit or deserves a reward. Faith is simple trust and humble dependence on God. Faith is when we stop depending on self and we start depending on Christ.

Look at verse 5. This verse makes it clear that God justifies the UNGODLY by faith. There is no one so bad that he cannot be justified and there is no one so good that he need not be justified. No matter how good or bad a person may be, in God's eyes he is ungodly and there is only one way for him to be justified—by faith.

Faith is the opposite of work. Faith is the channel or the means by which God declares that sinners are right with Him. There is no other way. Faith is taking God at His word and trusting Him to do what He says.

3. WE ARE TRULY BLESSED WHEN WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

Paul refers to David in Psalm 32. This blessedness came when David humbled himself before God in repentance and trusted God to do for him what he could not do for himself. David's prayer of repentance and faith is in Psalm 51. Then he wrote Psalm 32 to describe the blessedness of being forgiven and made right with God.

Notice the word "count" and "impute" in this text. We find this word 11 times in Chapter 4. In God's system of bookkeeping this describes sin being transferred from our account to Christ and His righteousness being transferred to our account. This transfer takes place when we put our faith in Christ.

We are justified by faith in Christ alone. Many claim to believe in salvation by faith, but not in salvation by faith alone. The word "alone" was the one word that sets apart the truth of the Bible from false teaching. The word "alone" was the hallmark of the Reformation. Some claim to believe in the Bible, but not in the Bible alone. Some claim to believe in salvation by grace, but not in grace alone. Some claim to believe in salvation by Christ, but not Christ alone. Some claim to believe in salvation by faith, but not by faith alone. We are justified by faith alone in Christ alone apart from any work or human goodness.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*