

"The Doctrine of Justification"

Romans 3:21-5:11

Part 7

Introduction: In our study of Romans we have been looking at how Paul has attached his teaching of justification by faith to an individual. That individual is Abraham. In Romans 3 Paul taught us that justification is only possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ and it is by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus. Paul made it very clear that justification is not by keeping the Law nor is it by any works that we can do. Here is a good illustration;

*An Englishman by the name of Ebenezer Wooten had just concluded a preaching service in the village square. The crowd had dispersed, and he was busily engaged in loading the equipment. A young man approached him and asked, "Mr. Wooten, what must I **do** to be saved?" Sensing that the fellow was trusting his own righteousness, Wooten answered in a rather unconcerned way, "It's too late!" The inquirer was startled. "Oh, don't say that, sir!" But the evangelist insisted, "It's too late!" Then, looking the young man in the eye, he continued, "You want to know what you must **do** to be saved. I tell you it's too late now or any other time. The work of salvation is done, completed, finished! It was finished on the cross." Then he explained that our part is simply to acknowledge our sin and receive by faith the gift of forgiveness.*

This is the very Truth that Paul is teaching. But there will always be those who would claim that his teaching is "theory". They would desire to see evidence of this Truth. That then is where Romans 4 comes in. In chapter 4 Paul takes this teaching and he attaches it to a man by the name of Abraham. Abraham lived before the Law so therefore we can conclude that he could not have been saved by the Law, so the question would be, "How was Abraham justified?"

Notice Romans 4:1-3

In these verse Paul challenges his readers to investigate the life of Abraham to see what they could find. He then points them to the FINAL AUTHORITY which is the Scriptures. The question then is, "What does the Bible/The Word of God say concerning the justification of Abraham?" Paul then answers that question by pointing his readers to Genesis 15.

Genesis 15:4-6

⁴ *And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

⁵ *And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

⁶ **And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

Abraham was justified **NOT** by works but by FAITH in the promises of God. Last week we looked at how Abraham had faith in the promise of a future Redeemer. In other words, he believed that Jesus Christ would come through his offspring and he believed that Jesus Christ would pay the price for his sin. We can see this in the Words of our Lord.

John 8:56

⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see **my day**: and he saw it, and was glad.*

Now Abraham did not see the fulfillment of this promise with his natural eye but in his mind, he was able to see the coming of Jesus Christ. He believed what God told him and he rested his faith in the coming Redeemer.

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, **but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them**, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

I. Abraham's Justification

Part 2

Paul will no continue and as he does he will use simple reasoning with his readers.

Notice Romans 4:4

Here in this verse Paul illustrates how works cannot be the means of justification. This illustration goes back to what Paul taught in Romans 3.

Romans 3:24, 28

²⁴ *Being justified **freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

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

Getting back to 4:4 Paul reasons that when a man works the reward/payment is not of grace but of debt. In other words when a man works the one he works for owes to him the payment because the man has earned it. Notice the words of *Kenneth Wuest*;

"Paul uses an illustration here taken from human affairs. He calls attention to the fact that when the employer gives the workman his pay, that is not counted as a favor, but as a legal obligation which the employer is bound to discharge. It is a debt which he owes his employee. The latter, out of courtesy, thanks his employer, but he is not legally obligated to do so. He earned the wages and he deserved them. If the sinner earned salvation by good works, God would be indebted to man and obligated to give it to him. It would not be a favor which God would do for man. And man would not need to thank God nor glorify Him for it."

If salvation was by works, then man could steal the glory away from God. Everything in the universe is for the glory of God.

Colossians 1:16

*¹⁶ For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, **and for him**:*

Notice Romans 4:5

Here is the contrast. The one who does no work but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, this person's faith is counted for righteousness. Here in this verse faith is contrast with works. There is a wonderful picture of this in the Old Testament that we need to consider seeing some very important parallels.

Numbers 21:5-9

⁵ And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

⁶ And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

⁹ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Here is an incident where Israel sinned by complaining against God and God sent fiery serpents into the midst of the people and when the serpents bit them they were poisoned, and they died. The people came to Moses and Moses prayed for the people and God then provided a way for the people to be healed. The way which God established for them to be healed is a picture of the faith required for salvation. Moses was to make a brass serpent and place it upon a pole and whosoever looked upon the serpent was healed, and he lived. Now Jesus used this brazen serpent on the pole when He spoke to Nicodemus about salvation.

John 3:14-18

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The serpent in the wilderness was a clear picture of salvation. Let me explain how the serpent on the pole represented Jesus on the cross.

The serpent is symbolic of sin and Jesus became sin for us when He hung upon the cross. The brass which the serpent was made from is symbolic of judgment and it was on the cross that Jesus Christ took the judgment for our sins. The people were saved from the snake bites by looking to the serpent and believing what God had said. We are saved by looking to the cross and believing that Jesus died for our sins as our Substitute just as God had said.

Now back in the wilderness there was nothing any man could do in his own power to save himself from the deadly snake bite. He could develop his own remedy, but it would do no good for he would die if he did not look to the serpent on the pole. The same is true of salvation today. We have all been poisoned by sin and we are dead spiritually and we are on a path that leads to the second death that is eternal separation from God. There are many who have concocted their own remedies for the forgiveness of sin but it all leads to eternal damnation.

Proverbs 14:12

¹² There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

The people in the wilderness were not told to work to be healed. They were not told to pray to be healed. They were not told to be baptized to be healed. They were told to look upon the serpent and be healed. For those who believed this and looked they were healed.

This is all a picture of how we are saved from the poison of sin. We are to look to the cross and believe that Jesus Christ died there to provide salvation for us. We are to believe that His death was the payment which God required for the forgiveness of sin. We are not told to work, pray, join the church, or to be baptized. We are told to BELIEVE. There are no works involved for you and me.

Notice Romans 4:5 again.

When we exercise our faith in Christ God then imputes His righteousness to our account. God justifies the UNGODLY. This statement is very important. Until a sinner sees themselves as UNGODLY they cannot be saved. This was the very problem the scribes and the Pharisees had. They believed they had self-righteousness and for that reason they could not be saved. It is not until a man sees his true sinful condition that he can be saved.

Now Paul will use another man from the Old Testament as an example of saving faith his name is David. He is used by Paul as another attack against the fortress of Judaism.

Notice Romans 4:6-8

Paul is quoting from Psalm 32.

Psalm 32:1-5

*Blessed is he whose transgression is **forgiven**, whose sin is **covered**.*

² Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

³ When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

⁴ For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

⁵ I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

In this Psalm David is reflecting back to his sin with Bathsheba. It was the sin of adultery and murder and David knew that under the Law he deserved death for both of the sins. But instead of death David was showed grace and mercy. His sin was forgiven and covered. He did not work for his forgiveness, but David was saved by faith.

Abraham represented those before the Law and how they were saved by faith and David represents those under the Law and how they were saved by faith also.

Notice Romans 4:7 again.

The word "forgiven" here is very important. It means "to take away". David also speaks of his sins being covered. Both words are used back in Psalm 32 also and they reveal much about the faith of David. These are amazing terms. In the Old Testament the sins of the righteous were COVERED by the blood of bulls and goats. They were never taken away until Jesus died upon the cross. At the cross the sins of the Old Testament saints were UNCOVERED and placed upon Jesus Christ and as they were paid for they were then taken away. This is exactly what God does when a sinner comes to Jesus Christ for salvation.

Psalm 103:12

¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

David knew his sins were covered by the blood of bulls and goats, but he also believed there would be a Redeemer who would come and take his sins away. David had faith in the future work of Jesus Christ. He did not know the details of what would happen at the cross, but he believed in God's promise of a Redeemer who would take away the sins of the world.

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

There is something in psalm 32:1 that Barnhouse points out that we need to see.

Psalm 32:1

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

The words that I have underlined and bolded here are in italics which means they were added by the translators. In the Hebrew the verse would look like this;

Psalm 32:1

Blessed is _____ transgression is forgiven, _____ sin is covered.

There are blanks here for us to place our names in. For me this verse would read like this;

Blessed is Keith Showalter, his transgression is forgiven, his sin is covered.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can place your name in the blanks.

Notice Romans 4:8

Here is another quote of David's and he is rejoicing because God would not impute his sin to his account. Now let me tell you what that means. Sin cannot be ignored so God must impute sin to someone's account. David's sin was not imputed to his account, but it was imputed to Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 53:6

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Conclusion:

Psalm 130:3-4

³ *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*

⁴ *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared/reverenced.*

When we come to Christ our sin is taken away and we can sing the words of one of the greatest hymns, "It is well with my soul".

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*