

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #17

Romans 4:13-25

In the early 1500s, Martin Luther had been sent to the University of Wittenberg to teach theology and the Bible and he became fascinated with the book of Romans. As he read it over and over again, it was somewhere near these very verses that he came to realize that no human works, even religious works, could ever make a person as righteous as God. Luther said: "I greatly longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans ... night and day I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is the righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy, He justifies by faith."

Now you would think that such a marvelous truth would be readily received. But when Martin Luther took his findings to the religious leaders of his day, the result was he was excommunicated from the church and outlawed from the city. Biblical truth cuts into souls and causes either a riot or a reformation.

If we turn to Acts 13:38-39 we see the wonderful message of grace that Paul gave to Antioch (13:14). His message was total forgiveness of all sins is by faith - no works and no Law. You would think all of the people would have yelled "hallelujah." But look at verses 49-50 - they were driven out of the region. If you preach this pure grace Gospel it will cause either a riot or a reformation.

Three of the biggest enemies against the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the doctrine of salvation by God's calculation, are: 1) Human works ; 2) Religious works ; 3) Religious Law . Many believe they may be right with God by their works. Many believe they may be right with God by their religion, including their rituals. Many believe they may be right with God by trying to keep the O.T. Law. Paul has already demolished the first two and now in this section in Romans he demolishes the third.

ONE CANNOT EVER BE RIGHT WITH GOD BY RELIGIOUS LAWS OR WORKS BUT ONLY BY RELYING ON GOD'S GRACE WHICH IS FOUND BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, FOR ONLY BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WILL GOD CALCULATE ONE AS RIGHTEOUS.

You cannot do anything to be right with God except totally trust in Jesus Christ to save you. Make no mistake about it - you will never be calculated by God as being righteous by observing religious laws or by your works , but only by relying totally on God's grace found by believing on Jesus Christ.

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #1 – God's promises are not fulfilled by the Law but by faith.
4:13

"The" promise that Paul has in his mind in this verse is the promise that the Messiah would come through the lineage of Abraham. What Paul is saying here is that the fulfillment of the promised Messiah was never by the Law. In fact, the process that brought righteousness to Abraham was faith not the Law .

The Law had nothing to do with the promise that God gave to Abraham.

(Reason #1) - The Law wasn't even given when the promise was made.

It was 500 years later.

(Reason #2) - Abraham was a sinner by his works - doubted, disbelieved, lied, adultery.

His works as a sinner had nothing to do with God fulfilling His promise.

(Reason #3) - The Bible says the opposite - Abraham was counted righteous by faith .
(Genesis 15:6).

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #2 – God's grace/faith system is destroyed by the Law. 4:14

The conjunction "for" explains what happens if someone thinks he can be right with God by keeping the Law:

(Result #1) - The whole faith system is made empty (κενοω) - empty, of no effect in quality

(Result #2) - Promises are nullified (καταργεω) - rendered inoperative, invalid, abolished

God has made promises that are not conditioned on man keeping the Law. If one relies on his keeping the Law or upon his own works, the entire grace/faith system is gone. The entire grace/faith system is destroyed.

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #3 – God's wrath is produced by the Law. 4:15

Can the works of the Law make a sinner righteous in God's sight? Can a person be right with God by keeping the law of God? **Absolutely never !**

Three specific texts answer that question very plainly:

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, 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.'"

We have five direct statements concerning the purpose of the Law:

Statement #1 - The Law was given to shut mouths. Romans 3:19a

Statement #2 - The Law was given to establish guilt. Romans 3:19b

Statement #3 - The Law was given to establish sin. Romans 3:20

Statement #4 - The Law was given to reveal we deserve wrath. **Romans 4:15**

Statement #5 - The Law was given to bring us to Christ. Galatians 3:24

According to **Romans 4:15**, the Law shows every one of us that we deserve God's wrath.

The Law shows us that we have deviated from God's path.

THEOLOGICAL PREMISE #4 – God’s grace always comes through faith. **4:26-25**

The preposition which begins **verse 16**, “for this reason” sets the stage for Paul’s final argument. On account of the fact that righteousness cannot come by keeping the Law, it must come through faith.

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

(Truth #1) - Future blessing to Abraham demands God’s grace . **4:16**

How can a sinful man like Abraham be given a promise that in him all the nations will be blessed and that he will be the father of all people and that the Messiah will come through his line? How could Abraham possibly receive such wonderful future blessings in view of the fact that he lied, that he had doubts, and that he was an adulterer? It is only by God’s grace .

(Truth #2) - Sovereign foreknowledge concerning Abraham demands God’s grace . **4:17**

God knew the future of Abraham and told Abraham of his future before Abraham was a believer. God promised to bless Abraham before he was counted 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 is dead in his trespasses and sins? **Because God’s promise to Abraham was never based on works. God’s promises to Abraham were always based on His grace .**

(Truth #3) - God’s Grace was appropriated to Abraham by faith . **4:18-22**

Fact #1 - Abraham had a faith that took God at His Word . **4:18**

Abraham did not have a blind faith, but he had a believing faith based upon the Word of God. When there was no other human reason to believe except God’s word, he believed . God’s Word. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said Abraham’s faith was based on “the bare Word of God” and on nothing else whatsoever (*Romans 3:20-4:25*, p. 211). He did not ask for some proof or some sign; he simply believed God.

Fact #2 - Abraham’s faith wasn’t hindered by unusual circumstances . **4:19-20**

Abraham was almost 100 and Sarah was over 90 (Genesis 17:17) when God promised him a son. He did not waver or stagger at the promises of God and that is the kind of faith that brings glory to God.

The kind of faith Abraham had was the kind of faith that believed God could make the impossible, possible . In fact, Abraham grew strong in his faith in the midst of unusual circumstances.

When a person, steeped in sin, simply believes that Jesus Christ can make him completely righteous in the sight of God, that is the faith that believes God can make the impossible, possible.

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

This business of being calculated by God as being righteous is not just for Abraham, it is also for you and me.

There are five critical points brought out in these powerful verses:

- 1) Righteousness that saves is by God's judicial calculation. **4:23-24a**
- 2) Righteousness is calculated by God to one who believes that God will calculate one as righteous if he will believe in Jesus our Lord. **4:24b**
- 3) Jesus Christ was delivered up. This was God's plan, not man's plan. **4:25a**
- 4) Jesus Christ was delivered up because of our sins. **4:25b**
- 5) Jesus Christ was raised to prove that God will judicially calculate us as righteous only when we believe in Jesus Christ. **4:25c**

God raised up Jesus Christ which proves His sacrifice for our sins was fully accepted. God has publicly demonstrated that there is only one Person who can give us justification - Jesus Christ!

We cannot earn this and we certainly do not deserve this. But when we believe on Jesus Christ, we are saved because God declares us so. God calculates us as righteous the moment we believe on Jesus Christ.