



ROMANS

The Gospel of God

The Gospel of Faith Alone!

Romans 4:1-12

Message #9 of 33 – S1137

Sermon given on January 19, 2025



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Gospel of Faith Alone!

Romans 4:1-12

Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Romans 4**
- Today, we continue the series through the letter to the Romans – **The Gospel of God!**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Gospel of Faith Alone!**
 - Paul is going to lay out a doctrine that is fundamental to our faith.
 - In my last message I said that the only thing we bring to our salvation is our sin.
 - When we repent of our sin and believe, Jesus saves us.
 - This is the doctrine of 'sola fide' which is Latin for 'faith alone'.
- The Scriptures teach that salvation is by faith alone in Christ Jesus alone by the grace of God alone.**

- What I said last time is that truth allows us to rest in our salvation.
 - I don't wonder or have doubts about my salvation.
 - I repented of my sins and put my trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross – I am saved. (**Ephesians 2:8-9**)
- For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.**
- Paul is going to talk about that in our text for the morning by looking at the faith of Abraham.
 - There are some who believe this doctrine was established during the Reformation in the 1500s.
 - In fact, this has always been God's plan for salvation, as we will see when we look at Genesis 15 later.
 - It is a very common belief that we must play a role in our own salvation.
 - One view is that if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds that God will accept you to heaven. (**R. Kent Hughes**)

"Most people think that if you just do your best you will somehow make it to heaven."

- Your best will never be good enough.
- Another view is that there are certain religious rites, rituals, and practices that make you acceptable to God.
- That would have been the view of many of the Jews of Paul's time.
- It would apply to many in liturgical churches like the Roman Catholics.
- This is sometimes called works-righteousness.
- If you do the right things, then God will accept you as righteous.
- Paul is going to counter those false ideas with a logical argument about the faith of Abraham.
- **Romans 4:1**
- Paul uses Abraham as an example of the kind of faith that pleases God.
- 'according to the flesh' – What did he achieve through human effort?
- **Romans 4:2-3**
- Even if Abraham had been the most righteous man on earth, he could brag about that to other humans, but he would have fallen short of God's perfect standard.
- Quotation of Genesis 15:6.
- Paul is saying that Abraham was justified before God before he did any the great works of righteousness.
- God had just promised to give him a son in his old age and to make him the father of a nation so great in number that they couldn't be counted.
- Abraham was old and his wife was unable to have children.
- Abraham didn't do anything to earn the righteousness of God except believe that what God said was true.
- God then in Genesis 15:17 God declared that His promise to Abraham was unconditional.
- Regardless of what Abraham or his descendants did, God was going to keep His promise to Abraham.
- The Greek word that is translated 'accounted' appears eleven times in Romans 4.
- It has the idea of crediting to one's account.

- Abraham didn't earn God's approval through works of human effort but through faith.
- Paul illustrates that in the next several verses.
- **Romans 4:4-5**
- If you work at a job and they pay you, it would not be an act of grace on the part of your employer.
- They owe you those wages because you worked for them.
- 'does not work' is referring to religious works or good works.
- Paul is discouraging working for your salvation.
- Instead, if someone believes, or puts their trust in God, their faith is credited as righteousness before God.
- 'Him who justifies the ungodly' – God makes right those who are not right.
- If there were religious or spiritual or good works you could do to be right with God, then you would be the one justifying yourself.
- Justification is a work that only God can do.
- No amount of good works, or religious rites, or spiritual exercises can make you right with God.
- That doesn't mean that those things are not important, but they only matter to God if they come from faith.
- Faith precedes works.
- Without faith none of those things are pleasing to God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- Paul said something that some might see as contradictory to what I just said in (2 Philippians 2:12-13).

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

- Paul is not saying work so that you can be saved.
- What he is saying is since you are saved exercise your salvation – do the spiritual works of salvation.
- An illustration would be exercising to build muscle.
- Exercise does not create muscle.

- A muscle must exist before it can be exercised and grown.
- The same is true of our faith.
- Another concept that some struggle with is that God justifies the ungodly.
- In our human sense of justice, we think God should justify the good people.
- The problem is – there are no good people – all have sinned and fallen short of God’s perfect standard.
- So, God made a way to be the just One and the justifier of the ungodly by sending Jesus to take the punish of the ungodly.
- All they need to do is by faith receive Christ’s sacrifice for their sin and they are made righteous before God (**Romans 5:6**).

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

- Holy God the Father can justify the ungodly through faith because God the Son died for them.
- Paul then describes the blessing of being right with God through faith apart from works.
- **Romans 4:6-8**
- The problem with trusting in works to be right with God is that you can never be certain you have done enough, or the right works to be right with God.
- A very clear picture of that is the sacrificial system of the Jews.
- They had to keep coming back to make sacrifices for their sin.
- Jesus’ sacrifice was a once-for-all sacrifice (**1 Peter 3:18**).

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...

- Paul quotes King David from Psalm 31:1-2 as David remarks about the blessing of God’s forgiveness over his sin with Bathsheba.
- David broke three of the Ten Commandments and the consequence for two of them was death.
- God graciously forgave David for his sin. He didn’t have to do anything, except acknowledge his guilt and believe the words of the prophet who told him God forgave him.
- David realized his forgiveness was the grace of God (**Psalm 51:16-17**).

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— these, O God, You will not despise.

- If we sin, and who doesn't sin, there is nothing we can do to atone for our sin.
- There is no work we can do or sacrifice we can make to make it right in God's eyes.
- There is no penance or ritual or religious exercise, like confessing to a priest that will result in forgiveness of that sin.
- The only remedy is to acknowledge that you sinned and believe that Jesus died for that sin (**1 John 1:9**).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Notice it doesn't say do ten hail Mary's and buy the pastor a cup of coffee.
- Repent and believe and you are forgiven.
- Paul finishes by saying something we already know – salvation is for everyone.
- **Romans 4:8-12**
- Circumcision was the outward and visible sign of God's covenant with Abraham.
- To a Jew no uncircumcised man could claim any share in God's covenant.
- For many Jews circumcision was a sign of their relationship with God – it made them right with God.
- Paul is saying circumcision doesn't make a Jew right God because God declared Abraham as righteous about fourteen years before he was circumcised.
- Faith made Abraham right with God, not religious works
- Abraham was declared righteous while he was a Gentile, therefore he was the father of faith for both the Gentiles and the Jews.
- This also makes Gentiles, non-Jewish Christians spiritual relatives of the Jews.
- We will conclude with two quick thoughts.
- We are saved by faith by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Works do not make us right with God, faith does,
- But that doesn't mean that good works are not necessary or important (**Ephesians 2:10**).

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- Because I am right with God, I can focus my attention on doing good to others.
- The second thing that faith alone gives us is the freedom of forgiveness.
- Paul has already declared that we all sin – we fall short of the glory of God.
- When we turn to Christ and repent of our sins, we are set free by Christ (**John 8:36**).

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

- We are freed from the penalty of sin – eternal separation from God.
- We also have the promise of being freed from the presence of sin with God in heaven forever.
- That handles our past and our future.
- The gospel also sets us free in our present.
- Through faith in Christ, we are freed from the power of sin today.
- We are no longer slaves to sin.
- We now have the power to say no to sin.
- And as our faith grows, we say no to sin more regularly.
- And when we do give in to sin, we simply repent and trust in God's promise to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- And then we refocus on the good works that God appointed for us to and in so doing we reveal to the world the amazing grace and glory of God.
- If you are a believer here or watching, you are right with God.
- If there is sin, repent and believe.
- And then, walk in the freedom of that truth.
- **Pray! Communion! Last Song!**