

Sermon #10, Romans 4
December 1, 2002
Pastor Wesley Rowe
Calvary Bible Church

Sermon by Greg Nichols:

Romans 3

V. 23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

V. 24, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

V. 25, Whom God set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God.

V. 26, For the showing, I say, of his righteousness, at this present season that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus.

I John 4

V. 9 "Herein is love not that we loved him but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Turn with me please in your Bibles to Romans 3:21-31. Follow please as I read this wonderful passage of Scripture.

Let's pray.

Last Sunday, we completed our study of Romans 3:21-31, which has been called, **"the clearest, most concise presentation of the Gospel message in the whole Bible"**. I don't know if you know it or not, but many great men have found Christ and His salvation from reading that section or similar ones from the Book of Romans. May I at the outset of today's sermon, take a few minutes of your time and share with you how God used the Book of Romans to bring some well-known men to Christ.

Have you heard of Augustine?

Augustine's conversion is recorded as follows:

"In the summer of AD 386, Augustine sat weeping in the garden of his friend over his miserable life. Augustine was contemplating the beginning of a new life, but he lacked the courage to break with his old life. As he sat, he heard a child singing in a neighboring house, 'Take up and read! Take up and read!' Taking up the book that belonged to his friend, he let his eyes rest on a portion of the Book of Romans. Instantly, at the end of his reading, a clear light flooded his heart and all the darkness of sin and doubt flooded away."

Have you ever heard of John Bunyan? He wrote Pilgrim's Progress, the Holy War and other books as well. Here is what he said happened to him as he read the Book of Romans for the first time.

"Upon reading Romans 3:24, 'and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus' it was as if I heard God saying to my deeply troubled, guilt-stricken soul, 'Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul, but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not upon thee, and I will deal with thee according as I am pleased with him.'"

Have you ever heard of John Wesley? The founder of the Methodist Church and the writer of many Gospel hymns, along with his brother Charles. Here is what happened to Wesley when he read the Book of Romans.

On May 24, 1738, Wesley attended a meeting where Luther's preface from his commentary on the Book of Romans was being read. "About a quarter before 9:00 p.m., while the reader was describing from Luther's commentary the change which God works in the heart through faith in

Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an everlasting assurance was given me that he had taken my sins away, even mine; and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Have you heard of Martin Luther? The man who was at the forefront of the Protestant Reformation. Here is what Luther said happened to him when he read the Book of Romans.

“I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. As I poured over it time and again, nothing stood in my way but the one expression, ‘righteousness from God’ which I first mistook to mean ‘righteousness from God whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous.’

Yet night and day I pondered these words, ‘righteousness from God’ until I grasped the truth that the righteousness from God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he declares righteous sinners by faith. Thereupon, I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. From then on, the whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before ‘the righteousness from God’ had filled me with hate, now those same words, ‘righteousness from God’ became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love to God. This passage of Paul became to me the gateway to heaven.”

Now before we move on to Romans 4, there is one further aspect of Romans 3:21-31 that I want to emphasize because Paul emphasizes it and it is indispensable to our salvation. I want you to notice how often Paul mentions the word, “faith” in vv. 21-31. **(Show verses 21-31 and have faith underlined each time that it is used).**

9 times Paul emphasizes the necessity of faith in Jesus if this righteousness is to come as a gift to sinners. V. 22 (2 times), v. 25 (1 time), v. 26 (1 time), v. 27 (1 time), v. 28 (1 time), v. 30 (2 times), v. 31 (1 time). Faith in Jesus is indispensable if God’s gift of righteousness is to come to sinners.

William Hendriksen said, **“Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice does not go into effect for anyone automatically. If a person wishes to obtain this great blessing—this turning away of God’s wrath, forgiveness, acceptance with God—he must exercise genuine faith in Christ, in and through whom God Triune reveals himself.”**
William Hendriksen

Notice also from these verses, as Hendriksen alludes to, that Paul tells us that it is not faith that brings this gift of righteousness to sinners, but it is faith in Jesus. Look at **v. 26. “Who have faith in Jesus”**. What Jesus? The Jesus of history as he appeared in the 1st Century, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, born as a descendent of Abraham, born as a descendent of David, fully God, fully man, crucified, rose again and ascended to heaven where He sits enthroned at the Father’s right hand. Why do I say that? For this reason. He is not the Jesus of the liberal churches. He is not the Jesus of some of the minority churches—a black Jesus, an Indian Jesus. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 11 that even in his day, in the 1st Century, there were Bible teachers who preached “another Jesus.” **II Cor. 11: “For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached to you . . .”** We must always ask ourselves when we hear the Person of Jesus mentioned by religious people, are they really talking about the Jesus of the Bible.

Now having said that, let’s begin our transition today into Romans 4. And as we transition, let me say this.

It is true that all of those men (Augustine, Bunyan, Wesley and Luther) lived in the same dispensation of time that you and I live in, after the cross-work of Jesus. We live post-crucifixion, post-resurrection of Jesus. **(Show a cross with BC period-OT, and AD period and show us living in NT era).** So it could be that you might say, “Well, we are all saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, but those living in the Old Testament dispensation were not saved that way. They were saved by works or by obedience to God’s law.”

And dear ones, that sentiment is exactly what some well-known, good hearted men in the history of the Christian Church have taught. Maybe you have heard it in Sunday School or in some fundamental church somewhere, “Today, we are saved by

faith in Christ; but in the OT era, they were saved by works.” Let us see today as we look at Romans 4 if that teaching which I was taught, which I have read, which I once briefly believed thought must be true, let’s see if it squares with the Word of God.

Paul is going to show through the lives of 2 well-known OT persons, that they too were saved by faith.

Let’s look today at Romans 4.

V. 1, What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?

V. 2, If, in fact, Abraham was justified (declared righteous) by works, he had something to boast about-but not before God.

V. 3, What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

(This quote is taken from Genesis 15:6!).

Do you see what Paul is saying? Paul is saying that justification by faith is in accord with the teaching of the OT. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, discovered this to be the means of salvation too.

V. 4, Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

V. 5, However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Now, Paul is not going to stop with Abraham. Paul is going to show that King David discovered this same truth. Look at v. 6.

V. 6, David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works;

And now Paul is going to quote Ps. 32 which David wrote.

V. 7, “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

V. 8, Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”

Do you remember when David wrote Ps. 32. Following his immoral night stand with Bathsheba, following the attempted cover-up of her pregnancy, following the murder of her husband, Uriah. After David repented and returned to God, he wrote these words. And Paul says in v. 6 that David wrote these words because David understood what Abraham understood that God credits righteousness to sinners apart from works, or apart from any human effort.

By the way, I hope that you recall what I have told you on several occasions during the previous 9 sermons on Romans. The crediting of righteousness to believing sinners is the greatest and most necessary blessing that could ever be given you from God. Without it, we are separated from God and doomed to eternal damnation. I want you to notice how often the word, “blessed” is used in Romans 4 or a cognate word.

4:6,

4:7,

4:8,

4:9, “Blessed”, “Blessedness” means “supremely well off”; “fortunate”,
“attribution of good fortune”.

How does a person gain righteousness before God? Without righteousness, there can be no right standing with God.

NT proofs that OT saints were saved by faith:

Romans 3:1-2

Romans 4 (Abraham and David).

Romans 9:30-32

Romans 10

Heb. 11

-Notice how often Paul emphasizes the indispensable role of faith in justification, and specifically, faith “in Jesus.” 9 times Paul emphasizes the necessity of faith in Jesus if this righteousness is to come as a gift to sinners. V. 22 (2 times), v. 25 (1 time), v. 26 (1 time), v. 27 (1 time), v. 28 (1 time), v. 30 (2 times), v. 31 (1 time). 9 times in this section (vv. 22-31, Paul emphasizes the importance of faith as the means of receiving this free pardon, this justification, this declaration of righteousness, from God. Paul is saying that **“Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice does not go into effect for anyone automatically. If a person wishes to obtain this great blessing-this turning away of God’s wrath, forgiveness, acceptance with God-he must exercise genuine faith in Christ, in and through whom God Triune reveals himself.”** (New Testament Commentary, “Romans” by William Hendriksen, p. 132.)

V. 26. “Who have faith in Jesus”. What Jesus? The Jesus of history as he appeared in the 1st Century, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, born as a descendent of Abraham, born as a descendent of David, fully God, fully man, crucified, rose again and ascended to heaven where He sits enthroned at the Father’s right hand.