

In View of God's Mercy - week 4

Romans 3:27-4:12

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Remember where we finished last week: **READ Romans 3:21-26**

- **He has appeared, apart from the law - even though the law pointed to him all along.**
- **For all who believe in Him, the righteousness of God is given by faith.**
- **All of us - no distinction Jew/Gentile → have sinned. We have not measured up.**
- **All of us who believe - no distinction → are justified, welcomed into the family of God, freely by his grace.**
- **The wrath of God - just in his judgment - was dealt with in the death of a perfect sacrifice.**
- **And now, we say yes to the only Father, as Matt shared last week from Tim Keller:**
 - **“He is a Father worth having & a Father we can have.”**

What are the implications of this wonderful news?

What does it mean for the Jews of Paul's day. For the Gentiles? For us?

READ Romans 3:27-31

We could make the statement that because of sin, the world has been filled with cultures, nations, and peoples that swell with national pride. And in the right ways, this creates affinity, unity, and bonds that are needed and necessary. However, sin quickly leads to the condemnation of EVERYONE else.

God, thank you for not making me _____. For the Jews this had become a massive blindspot in the early days of the church. Even Peter had to be corrected by Paul when tempted to not eat with Gentile brothers and sisters because of what other Jews might think of him. No one is above boasting.

If anyone had the right to boast, certainly it would have been Paul. He had far surpassed all other peers and had quickly moved into the who's who of the Jewish religious and social elite.

And then he met Jesus. And Jesus introduced him to His FATHER.

Paul, time and time again, points to the supremacy, the ultimate worth, and majesty of the Name of Jesus.

Therefore all boasting in the flesh, in works, in race is excluded in Christ. Not based on the law of works, but on the law of faith.

As Stott teaches, “All humans are seasoned boasters. Boasting is the language of our fallen self-centeredness.”¹

V.28 - Paul reminds them, and us, that they are justified by faith apart from the law (both the keeping of the law and the privilege of having been given the law). - works/identity in the law given.

- We have not earned it by works →

¹ Stott, John. *The Message of Romans, The Bible Speaks Today*, p.106.

- We have not earned it because of race or nation

V.29-31 - wonderfully, God is the God of Jews and Gentiles. He justifies those whom have been given the patriarchs, the prophets, the law, and through whom came the Messiah.

So by no means do we get rid of the law. It is the wonderful bedrock by which faith is given.

The requirements have not changed. Holiness is required. But boasting is excluded, because you cannot achieve it on your own.

No, in Christ, we uphold the law. The law of works upheld in his life, death and resurrection and through faith have been granted faith and have received his righteousness before the Father.

Read Romans 4:1-12

Paul then goes straight for the heart of national pride by speaking on Abraham:

Here's the one we have held in such high esteem for generations. And rightly so...

But for the wrong reasons.

V.1-2 - Even if Abraham could have boasted in some sort of keeping of the law, he still would not be able to boast before God. Remember, "all have sinned and fall short..."

V.3-4 - but what does the Scripture say?

- God tells an old man (he was 75 when he left for the land of Canaan) - Genesis 12 - I will do this thing...believe me Abram
- Genesis 15 - God makes a promise: 15:5-6 - "he (God) brought him (Abram) outside and said, 'Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he (Abram) believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."
- The law has not been given.
- The sign of God's people (circumcision) has not been given.
- All that Abram has is the voice of the God of Heaven, leading him, calling him, and making promises.
- And Abram believes, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

This idea that faith is a new testament reality because of Christ and the Old Testament is about works of righteousness done by a person, or priest.

V.4-8

David sings:

[1] Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

[2] Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit. **Romans 4:7-8**, quoting **Psalm 32:1-2**

He goes on in other Psalms:

- For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great. (Psalm 25:11)

- Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. (Psalm 25:18)

Since his sins are a constant reality to him, so is the mercy and love and grace and goodness of God.

- Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your **steadfast love**. (Psalm 25:6)
- According to **your steadfast love** remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord! (Psalm 25:7)
- All the **paths of the Lord** are steadfast love. (Psalm 25:10)
- Turn to me and **be gracious to me**. (Psalm 25:16)²

Steadfast love, the way of the Lord is gracious and merciful, pardoning the guilt of a man that knew his depravity and had tasted of water of life found in the Father's presence.

Nothing to deserve it, but given it wholly, freely, because God saw to it.

Let that sink in for a moment. You, and David, and Abraham, are counted righteous. You are a son, daughter. And you did nothing to deserve it!

You were dead, now you are alive. You were lost in sin, and you have been reconciled to God.

V.10 - How was it counted to him? Was it before or after?

- **Genesis 17** - when Abram was 99 (14 years after his salvation came and he was counted righteous) he receives the **sign and the seal** (v.11) that would physically mark the people of God as different.
- It was years before. And it served as a marker and reminder of his faith.
- Before you knew God, he knew you.
- Faith was given to you as a gift - and you believed.
 - And when you believed, before the sign and seal of your salvation (baptism, now) was given, you were saved → that is you believed where he found you.

V.11 → the purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without circumcision, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and v.12) to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Or as one of my favorite Pastors, Eugene Peterson once wrote on these verses:

And it means further that Abraham is father of all people who embrace what God does for them while they are still on the "outs" with God, as yet unidentified as God's, in an "uncircumcised" condition. It is precisely these people in this condition who are called "set right by God and with God"! Abraham is also, of course, father of those who have undergone the religious rite of circumcision not just because of the ritual but because they were willing to live in the risky faith-embrace of God's action for them, the way Abraham lived long before he was marked by circumcision.³

² This list of David's Psalms and connection to justification through faith are from John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/can-anyone-really-be-blameless>, May 1, 2017.

³ Eugene H. Peterson, *THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, 2018.

As we think about what this means for us, I want to point out a few things:

- 1) The word “credited” (logizomai) is a term often used in accounting situations. It occurs 5 times in 6 verses.
 - Tony Merida makes the comment: “By God’s grace, God would account to him a righteousness that he did not have on his own. God granted him the status of righteous when he believed.”⁴
 - John Stott writes, “(Paul’s) emphasis on faith, Abraham believed God, plainly shows, then, that God’s crediting faith as righteousness is not a rewarding of merit but a free and unmerited decision of divine grace. Faith is not an alternative to righteousness, but the means by which we are declared righteous.”⁵
 - Sometimes this word “credit” is translated “impute.”
 - Stott continues:
 - If credit is an accounting term, then impute is a legal one.
 - “When God justifies sinners, he doesn’t make them righteous immediately (that is the process of sanctification over a lifetime), but he “counts them as righteous.”
 - In Christ, the Father chooses to **reckon you as righteous**, to see you as such, as he’s the Son.⁶
 - Your salvation, your belief, and mine, is due to the “**unmerited decision of divine grace.**”
 - **You have been counted righteous. Your account is no longer bankrupt.**
 - **You were not owed this as a worker would be owed wages.**
 - **The right standing of the Son is now yours.**
- 2) Because of this reckoning, You stand in a long line of faithful believers who have been saved by grace through faith.
 - Where is your life incongruent with this wonderful truth?
 - Would you count the riches of this world as rubbish? Would you serve your neighbor as yourself?
 - Do you agree with Paul when you think of this church: **So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8**
- 3) **Faith either has been given to you, or is extended you for salvation this day. And you have all that you need in him:**
 - For those who believe, you have been reckoned right by God and with God; therefore,
 - **His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)**

⁴ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Romans, Christ Centered Exposition Commentary*, Nashville, 2021, p.62.

⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

⁶ Ibid., p. 114.