

TIME OF REFLECTION

“Socially prescribed perfectionism is closely related to anxiety; people who suffer from anxiety are more prone to it. Being a perfectionist also increases your anxiety because you fear the shame of public failure from everything you do.”

~Jonathan Haidt, social psychologist at NYU, in his book *The Anxious Generation*

“It is the struggle of the natural man for self-justification. He finds it only in comparing himself with others, in condemning and judging others. Self-justification and judging others go together, as justification by grace and serving others go together.”

~Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), pastor-theologian executed by the Nazis

“They all therefore were glorified and magnified, not through themselves or their own works or the righteous doing which they wrought, but through His will. And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning....”

~Clement of Rome, early church leader, in a letter written to Corinth in c. A.D. 96

“For ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’ In like manner we also are justified by faith in God: for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Now ‘not by the law is the promise to Abraham, but by faith’ for Abraham was justified by faith: and ‘for a righteous man the law is not made.’ In like manner we also are justified not by the law, but by faith....”

~Irenaeus of Lyon (c.125-c.202) in his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

“When someone believes in him who justifies the ungodly, that faith is credited as justice to the believer, as David too declares that person blessed whom God has accepted and endowed with righteousness, independently of any righteous actions. What righteousness is this? The righteousness of faith, preceded by no good works, but with good works as its consequence.”

~Augustine (354-430), North African bishop, in his *Exposition of the Psalms*

“The righteousness of God is not that by which God is righteous but that with which he clothes man when he justifies the ungodly”

~Augustine (435-430) in his *A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*

“Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not.”

~Martin Luther, (1483-1546), German reformer

SERMON – “The God Who Justifies the Ungodly” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Romans 4:1-25 (NIV)*

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

⁴Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷“Blessed are those
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

⁸Blessed is the one
whose sin the Lord will never count
against them.”

⁹Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹²And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.