

Title: How to be Blessed by God

Text: Romans 4:1-8

Imagine with me that you received a message from God that He wants to bless you in a special way. He wants to do something for you that will bring you joy, peace, and contentment. He wants to show His goodness and love for you.

Most people I know would love to have this kind of message from God.

In a day of so much heartache, frustration, and pain, who wouldn't want this kind of hope-filled message from God?

Review Sermon Theme - Unashamed - Building the Church Through the Gospel

Review Last Sermon Passage - The last time we were in Romans was March 21st and we studied [Romans 3:27-31](#) - Where Paul demonstrates to his audience that...

The Way of Faith is Way Better than Any Other Way!

Let's take a minute and read through that text to get us ready for today's text of Scripture...

Romans 3:27-31 ESV

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

The Jews had no reason to boast in the works of the Law because the works of the Law do not save. The Law is not the place you will find God's blessing!

And what Paul teaches in chapters 2 and 3, he illustrates in chapter 4 with two prominent men, heroes of the faith from the Old Testament. Abraham and David. Mostly Abraham for sure.

Take a look at [Romans 4:1-8](#) with me...

Romans 4:1-8 ESV

*What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work **but believes** in him who **justifies** the **ungodly**, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."*

Paul is using the example of Abraham and David to prove his point against his critics, that justification (*being declared right before God*) has always been about faith. These irrefutable examples of Abraham and David are irrefutable because they are...

1. Two of the most prominent men in the Old Testament.
2. Their words are found in the Law/Teachings ([Gen 15:6](#)), and the Writings ([Psalm 32:1-2](#)) thus authoritative to the Jews!

These critics of Paul believed that Abraham, in particular was justified before God by his works! Paul sets out to clearly demonstrate from the Old Testament Scriptures that this was not so.

And if you are here today thinking that you will be blessed by God by what you do, I'm so glad God brought you here this morning. Because I believe God has a word for you!

Big Idea - Counting on Your Works Counts You Out! Belief Brings a Far Better Blessing!

There are many things the Bible has to teach us. But there is one idea that we must understand clearly.

Paul has labored over the last three chapters to help his audience understand their state before God, and the fact that there is nothing they can do about it.

If you count on your works, your good deeds, your good actions, you are counting on the wrong thing.

After all, how good is good enough? How can you be sure you are doing enough to please God?

So, think of Chapters 1-3 as Paul's attempt at communicating objective truth - this is the way it is - we are all sinners and because of this fact, we are lost and unable to have a relationship with God and go to His Heaven.

And think of chapter 4 as a powerful example/picture of this salvation by faith in the life of Abraham.

Again, Paul mentions David in the verses we are covering today, but the main thrust of this chapter is about Abraham.

Paul makes it clear that...

Abraham was not justified before God by works -

Paul throws down the theological gauntlet in these verses by appealing to an Old Testament hero.

- A man that the Jews found their identity in.

- A man who is at the very beginning of the Jewish Nation.
- A man that was around 400 years prior to God giving His law to Moses ([Acts 7:6](#)).

Look again at verses 1-2...

Romans 4:1-2 ESV

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Did Abraham have something to boast about? Yes, yes, he did!

- Father of the Jewish nation - God chose him specifically! - *“our forefather according to the flesh.”*
- His children would outnumber the sands of the sea and the stars in the sky!
- He was a friend of the most powerful being in the universe, God Himself!

But did he cause any of these things to happen?

No! God was the cause behind of everything I just mentioned about Abraham!

Paul makes a bold claim in verse two. It was bold because many of the Jews thought Abraham was justified by his works. That he was perfect! Paul debunks this wrong thinking. *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”*

What does it mean to be justified? -

“The act of God in bringing sinners into a new covenant relationship with himself through the forgiveness of sins. It is a declarative act of God by which he establishes persons as righteous—that is, in right and true relationship to himself.” - Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Tyndale Bible Dictionary, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 764.

Abraham was **NOT** justified by works; His works were a result of his justifying faith! He brought nothing to the table.

Even though He was revered and held up by the Jews as a pious, holy man - Paul argues it was not his works that made him right before God.

Listen and think about this truth-filled quote by Jonathan Edwards...

You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary. - Jonathan Edwards

Father Abraham is no exception to Edwards's claim! And if he were standing before us today would freely admit to you that even though he may have areas in his life that he could boast about before us, he has nothing that he can boast about before God.

Why? Because everything he had and everything he did, is because of God.

Paul has the same attitude...

Philippians 3:1-10 ESV

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Folks, none of us here this morning have anything to boast about before God.

You will stand before God one day. I promise you that!

You will not stand before Him and explain to him all that you have done over the course of your life and then demand entrance into His heaven.

It is His Heaven. It is His home, and He sets the standard for entrance to it, and He sets the standard for a relationship with Him.

He is perfectly, holy, righteous, and good! He is premier and best in all ways!

You and I are broken sinners, lost in our sin. Nothing to boast about before God - only our unrighteousness!

Romans 3:10 ESV

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

And because of this, we cannot stand before him in the confidence of our deeds.

As stated earlier, the only thing we bring to salvation is our **SIN** that made it necessary!

Abraham knew this! Paul knew this!

DO YOU KNOW THIS? Do you understand the grave situation you are in before God?

If you think your goodness or your good works will set you free when you stand before God, you are so, so, wrong!

Counting on your works, counts you out!!

So, if we are **not** justified by what we do and how we live, on what basis can we be justified before God?

Well, Paul brings us back to Father Abraham for the answer...

Abraham was justified by his belief and so are you!

In order to make his point that justification isn't by works, following the law, etc, Paul goes all the way back to a verse in the book of [Genesis 15:6](#) where God told Abram that his children would be as the number of the stars in the heavens. And Abram believed God! And his belief was **COUNTED** (important word) by God to Abram as righteousness.

His righteousness (right standing with God) came about by Abram's **belief** in God!

Belief AKA **Faith**

What is **Faith**?

The Lexham Bible Dictionary Faith

FAITH (πίστις, *pistis*). Reliance upon and trust in God; a central emphasis of Christianity.

Belief or faith is the necessary mindset for eternal salvation with God. This is Paul's point in verses 3-5...

Romans 4:3-5 ESV

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Counted (*logizomai*) *to be credited — to be or become attributed or reckoned as an asset in someone's (financial) account.*

Abraham believed God and that was sufficient for God to consider him righteous. Because of Abram's faith, God credited his account. What works will NEVER accomplish FAITH does in one fell swoop!

When you work, you get a paycheck - You are given what you are due.

Spiritually what is our paycheck?

We are all sinners - every last one of us - and our due is death - eternal death!

Romans 6:23 ESV

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And that free gift is accepted by faith in God and His amazing graciousness.

We are to believe that God JUSTIFIES the Ungodly! Who are the ungodly? Everyone!!

Abraham believed and it was counted as righteousness.

Do you work for God's favor or do you believe that He justifies the ungodly?

One choice brings everlasting death in Hell, the other brings everlasting life with God in His Heaven!

Counting on Your Works Counts You Out! Belief Brings a Far Better Blessing!

King David agrees with Abraham (vs. 6-8) -

Paul is pulling out another powerhouse from the Old Testament. Another man the Jews had a tremendous regard for. Another man who was after God's own heart.

But instead of being on the positive side of faith - belief in the Word of God.

David's example comes from the negative side of ignoring what God says.

David was a great king who also made a great error!

He had an illicit affair with a married woman (Bathsheba). He got her pregnant.

Trying to cover it up, he manipulated the situation by bringing her husband back from war so he would have sex with his wife and then everyone would think it was his baby and not David's.

Uriah, the husband refused to go be with his wife because the other soldiers were still out fighting. His thought was, how can I enjoy myself with my wife, when my brothers are suffering and serving their King?

He was a man of great integrity.

So, because that plan didn't work, David had Uriah killed in battle. You can read about it in [2nd Samuel 11](#). What a dirtbag!

However...

David finally repented and asked God for forgiveness. God granted him forgiveness. And so, he wrote these words from [Psalm 32:1-2](#). Paul quotes them in verses 6-8...

Romans 4:6-8 ESV

just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

David knows what it means to have his *"lawless deeds forgiven, and his sins covered and not counted against him."*

And the point Paul makes is righteousness is not connected to works in a salvific sense.

Because of faith in Christ, and Christ alone, your lawless deeds (those things that have been done against God and his law) have been set right. They are forgiven.

What is Forgiveness?

Lexham Theological Wordbook Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the release, on the part of the creditor or offended party, of any expectation that a debt will be repaid or that an offender will receive punishment for an offense.

When describing the removal of an inappropriate offense in this way, the removal does not condone the behavior or suggest approval for the offense.

If you are IN CHRIST by FAITH, you are released from the penalty of your lawless actions against God. God will not COUNT those “actions against Him,” those SINS, - He will not count them against you!

You are free - not by working and paying off a debt - but by faith in the ONE who willingly, lovingly, and graciously paid that debt for you. A debt you could never pay!

Think this through with me. All that David did against Bathsheba, Uriah, his country, etc, ultimately, he did against God.

Check out [Psalm 51](#), another Psalm written by David about the Bathsheba/Uriah incident. Notice what David says...

Psalm 51:1-4 ESV

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

All that David did in this one episode, was forgiven by God.

The fact is, even though David's life was far from perfect - He stood righteous before God because of His **FAITH** in God.

The same is true of Abraham. The father of the Jewish nation was justified, not by his works, but because of his **FAITH** in Jesus. He looked ahead and had faith in the coming Messiah!

John 8:56 ESV

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”

The Old Testament saints had FAITH in the coming Messiah, just like we have faith in the same Messiah that has come and will come again!

Dr. Douglas Moo...

Romans Original Meaning

The key point in what David says in Psalm 32 for Paul is that the people who are blessed are not those who have earned something from God; they are the ones who have received something from him.

Here we find the heart of the good news: God accepts us, through our faith, just as we are. In his grace he “covers” our sins, not counting them against us.

Your sins, my friend, as many and as wicked as they are, are not COUNTED against you if you believe God’s gospel!

Counting on Your Works Counts You Out! Belief Brings a Far Better Blessing!

Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation that started in 1517, understood this very well. He staked his life on this truth. He believed justification by faith was the hallmark of biblical Christianity.

He said this...

“People should put their trust in nothing by Jesus Christ alone, not in their prayers, merits or their own good deeds.” - Martin Luther

My wife, Angie shared a meme with me that encapsulates the truth of this passage...

“Things that won’t get you into Heaven: Good works, baptism, church, religion, Sunday School, charity, money, mass, communion, parents, political affiliation, denomination, friends, positive thinking, and just being a “good person.”

“Things that WILL get you into Heaven: JESUS! Do you know Him? Have you fully trusted in Him, and ONLY Him, for your salvation?”

Counting on Your Works Counts You Out! Belief Brings a Far Better Blessing!

It is a far better blessing! This is Paul’s point in verse 6...

Romans 4:6 ESV

just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

The blessing doesn’t come from work - the blessing comes from God who considers us righteous by faith!

Quite frankly, can you think of a better blessing than being considered righteous by God?

- It’s God’s declaration that you are righteous - He doesn’t lie!
- The fact that you are considered righteous by God comes with so many blessings! Read [Ephesians 1](#) and 2 for proof.
- Or...

1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- The best blessing of all is that you will be with Jesus for all of eternity - no more sin. No more pain. No more crying. No more regret...

What did you do to receive this blessing? You believed. That's it! What a gift from God!

Counting on Your Works Counts You Out! Belief Brings a Far Better Blessing!

Abraham was the hero of the Jewish faith, but the Jews forgot that it was by His faith that he was a Jew.

Abraham was Justified by faith not by his works. His works, as impressive as they might be, were insufficient and unable to put him in a right relationship with God.

But because he believed God, God credited grace upon grace to his account.

What about you?

Do you think it is your Good works, baptism, church, religion, Sunday School, charity, money, mass, communion, parents, political affiliation, denomination, friends, positive thinking, and just being a "good person." That any one of these things put you in a right relationship with God?

They do not! They cannot!

But believing can.

Not just believing but believing in the right thing can. Believing in the right **person** is your only hope.

And that person is Jesus.

You know that promise that God gave Abraham? That his children would be as many as the stars in the heavens?

That came to fruition and is still coming to fruition because of a rather famous descendant of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of the Jewish Nation and Jesus was a Jew! And the millions and millions that have placed their justifying faith in Jesus have become the descendants of Abraham. Jew and Gentile alike!

Are you a descendant of Abraham?

Can you sing that old children's song with confidence this morning?

"Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham."

"I am one of them, and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord."

If you would place your faith in Jesus Christ this morning. Not only will you be a son or daughter of Abraham, but by Faith you will become a child of God!

And there is NO greater **BLESSING** than that!

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. What do these verses teach me about our character?
2. What do these verses teach me about God and his character?
3. Because these words are from God, they are TRUTH! What truth is he asking me to believe?
4. What do I need to do to obey him?
5. With whom can I share these truths?