SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

Romans 3:27–4:5 — Grace, Faith, and a Life of Discipleship

Brief Summary

Paul teaches that we are made right with God through faith, not by works that attempt to earn salvation. Yet grace does not make good works or spiritual growth optional. Paul and James address different questions: Paul rejects relying on works of the law to be saved, while James challenges a faith that never becomes visible in action. Because we cannot save ourselves, we can rest in what Jesus has done—and intentionally grow into the life God has prepared for us.

1. SALVATION IS A GIFT WE RECEIVE BY FAITH

Paul's argument in Romans is that all humanity needs rescue and that no one can earn right standing with God by keeping the law. Abraham "believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." Good works done before faith do not make us worthy of salvation; we are invited to rest in what Jesus has already accomplished.

"We get to REST in what Jesus has done for us."

Takeaways

- We cannot save ourselves or earn God's acceptance through our performance.
- Faith receives what God has done for us through Jesus.
- Spiritual practices are not a way to purchase grace; they help shape a life that responds to grace.

Discussion Questions

1. Why can it be tempting to measure our standing with God by our performance, religious activity, or ability to follow rules?
2. What difference does it make to know that we can rest in what Jesus has done rather than trying to make ourselves worthy of salvation?
3. How can spiritual practices like prayer, Scripture, repentance, and worship be responses to grace rather than attempts to earn it?

2. GRACE DOES NOT MAKE GOOD WORKS OPTIONAL

Paul and James are not contradicting one another. Paul argues that Gentiles do not need to become Jewish or depend on works of the law to inherit God's kingdom. James challenges people who claim to have faith but whose lives do not demonstrate it. Works do not earn salvation, but a living faith produces a changed life.

"Faith that lacks works does not work!"

Takeaways

- Works prior to faith cannot make us worthy of salvation.
- Works after receiving salvation are not optional; they express the life of faith.
- Paul and James use some of the same words while addressing different questions and audiences.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you explain the difference between doing good works to earn salvation and doing good works because of the salvation we have received?
2. Why do you think Christians sometimes treat discipleship—prayer, Scripture, repentance, worship, and loving neighbors—as optional?
3. Where have you seen genuine faith become visible through someone's choices, habits, or care for others?

3. GROWTH REQUIRES INTENTIONALITY

We are people in process: not perfect but still growing. Grace is not an excuse to remain unchanged. Ephesians 2:10 says we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God prepared in advance for us. The question is not whether we have arrived, but whether we are intentional about growing as disciples.

"We're a people in process."

Takeaways

- Discipleship is not an optional track for especially serious Christians; it belongs to the life of faith.
- Practices such as prayer, Scripture, repentance, worship, and community help us grow over time.
- Use rhythms and opportunities—such as Advent, Lent, retreats, and Community Group—to pursue growth intentionally.

Discussion Questions

1. When you hear the word “discipleship,” what comes to mind? In what ways have you treated spiritual growth as optional or essential?
2. Which practice or rhythm has most helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus, and what made it meaningful?
3. What is one realistic way you could become more intentional about spiritual growth in the season you are in now?

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Grace means we do not have to earn our salvation; Jesus has done what we could not do for ourselves. But grace also calls us into a new life. Good works are not the price of God’s gift—they are part of the life we are created to live in response to it. We can rest in Christ’s finished work while continuing to grow in faith, love, and obedience.

Group Reflection

1. If someone observed your daily rhythms, relationships, priorities, and treatment of others, what might they learn about the place of Jesus in your life?
2. Where do you most need to rest in God’s grace, and where might you need to take a more intentional step toward growth?
3. What practical change could help you become more consistent in prayer, Scripture, repentance, worship, or loving your neighbor?

Final Group Question

How would your life change if you held these two truths together: you cannot earn God’s grace, and the life of faith is meant to grow and bear fruit? Which side of that tension do you find easier to remember, and which do you tend to neglect?

Personal Application

“Because I want to respond to God’s grace with an intentional life of discipleship, this week I will _____.”

Prayer Focus

- Thank God that salvation is a gift received through faith, not something we can earn.
- Ask God to help you rest more deeply in what Jesus has done.
- Ask God to grow in you a faith expressed through prayer, Scripture, repentance, worship, and love for your neighbor.
- Pray that Parkside would become a community that receives grace with gratitude and pursues growth together.