

## Romans Session 54 Abraham Justified by Faith 3

*Micah 6:6-8 (NASB)*

*<sup>6</sup> With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?*

*<sup>7</sup> Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

*<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?*

We said last time together that even genuine faith does not in itself merit or produce the perfect righteousness apart from which no man can come to God.

### ABRAHAM WAS NOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS

His faith is rather reckoned as that required righteousness.

The "reckoning" Paul speaks of here is justification, that forensic act of God whereby He imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to the sinners account, then declares His verdict that the forgiven one is fully just.

In his book, "Redemption Accomplished and Applied, John Murray wrote, "God cannot but accept into His favor those who are invested with the righteousness of his own Son. While His wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, his good pleasure is also revealed from heaven upon the righteousness of his well-beloved and only-begotten" ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], p. 124)

God thus justifies the ungodly, not by simply disregarding their sin, but having imputed our sin to Christ, who paid the penalty in full, He now reckons Christ's righteousness to us.

*Isaiah 53:4-5 (NASB)*

*<sup>4</sup> Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup> But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.*

Because God credits the believer's sin to Christ's account, He can credit Christ's righteousness to the believer's account. God could not have justly credited righteousness to Abraham had not Abraham's sin, like every believer's sin, been paid for by the sacrifice of Christ's own blood.

Before the cross, the believer's sin was paid in anticipation of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and since the cross the believer's sin has been paid in advance.

Commenting on God's reckoning righteousness to believers, Arthur Pink wrote;

*"it is called the righteousness of God, because He is the appointer, approver, and imputer of it. It is called, the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ because he wrought it out and presented it unto God. It is called the righteousness of*

*faith*, because faith is the apprehender and receiver of it. It is called man's righteousness because it was paid for him and imputed to him.

All these varied expressions refer to so many aspects of that one perfect obedience unto death which the Saviour performed for His people. (*The Doctrines of Election and Justification [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974], p. 188*)

God's reckoning a believer's faith as His own divine righteousness is an incomprehensible but incontrovertible truth. It thrills the heart of those who place their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior.

When a penitent sinner is confronted by the majesty, power, and justice of God, he cannot help seeing his own lostness and the worthlessness of his own works.

By divinely-given insight he realizes he is worthy only of God's condemnation. But God gives divine assurance that, through a sinner's faith in Jesus Christ, He not only will save him from condemnation but will also fill him with His own eternal righteousness.

The truly penitent sinner cries out with the prophet Micah, who confessed,

*Micah 6:6-7 (NASB)*

*<sup>6</sup> With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves?*

*<sup>7</sup> Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

A simple acrostic, using the letters of the word *faith*, may help in understanding the elements of saving faith.

F = represents facts. Faith is not based on a blind leap into the unknown and unknowable, as many liberal and neo-orthodox theologians would have us believe.

it is based on facts of God's redeeming work through His Son Jesus Christ.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul declared;

*1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NASB)*

*<sup>1</sup> Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,*

*<sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*

*<sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,*

*<sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

*<sup>6</sup> After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;*

*<sup>7</sup> then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;*

*<sup>8</sup> and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.*

To further show the importance of the fact of Jesus' resurrection, Paul went on to say;

**1 Corinthians 15:14 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> *and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.*

**1 Corinthians 15:17 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> *and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

A = represents agreement. It is the one thing to know the truth of the gospel; it is quite another to agree with it. The believing heart affirms the truth it receives from God's Word.

I = represent internalization, the inner desire of a believer to accept and apply the truth of the gospel to his own life. Speaking of Christ, the apostle John wrote;

**John 1:11-13 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*

<sup>22</sup> *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,*

<sup>23</sup> *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Internalization also involves the genuine desire to obey Christ as Lord;

**John 8:31b (NASB)**

<sup>31</sup> *"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*

T = represents trust. In some ways and in some contexts, trust is a synonym for faith.

But trust also carries the idea of having unreserved confidence in God, of trusting Him to keep His promises to never forsake us as His children and to provide all our needs.

The parables of the hidden treasure and of the pearl of great price (**Matt 13:44-46**) both teach the necessity of a believer's surrendering all he has for the sake of Christ, of affirming and trusting in His Lordship and His Grace.

Genuine trust involves turning away from sin and self and turning to God.

That turning is called repentance, apart from which no person can be saved.

Repentance is so much a part of the gospel that it is sometimes equated with salvation.

Peter declares;

**2 Peter 3:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

H = represents hope. Every believer is saved in the hope of going to live eternally with God in heaven, although he has never seen heaven or seen the Lord in whom he believes.

When Thomas refused to believe Jesus was raised from the dead until he touched his Lord's body, Jesus said;

**John 20:29b (NASB)**

<sup>29</sup> *"Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."*

The vast majority of those who have trusted in Christ over the centuries have never seen Him.

Even those who saw Him after the resurrection and witnessed His ascent to heaven had only the hope, and not yet the reality, of their joining Him one day in heaven.

Until he meets the Lord through death or in the second coming, every believer must live in hope of that which he has not yet fully received.

### JUSTIFICATION BRINGS BLESSING

*Romans 4:6-8 (NASB)*

<sup>6</sup> *just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:*

<sup>7</sup> *"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.*

<sup>8</sup> *"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."*

Paul here cites David in order to establish that the greatest king of Israel understood and taught that justification is by faith alone.

The **blessing** David is speaking about is salvation. This is God's supreme **blessing** offered to fallen mankind.

The only one who can receive it are those for **whom God reckons righteousness apart from works.**

In Psalm 32 David declared;

*Psalm 32:1-2 (NASB)*

<sup>1</sup> *How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!*

<sup>2</sup> *How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

David clearly understood God's grace. Listen to his prayer when found in sin;

*Psalm 51:1-14 (NASB)*

<sup>1</sup> *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.*

<sup>2</sup> *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.*

<sup>3</sup> *For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.*

<sup>4</sup> *Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.*

<sup>5</sup> *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

<sup>6</sup> *Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.*

<sup>7</sup> *Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

<sup>8</sup> *Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.*

<sup>9</sup> *Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities.*

<sup>10</sup> *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*

<sup>12</sup> *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.*

<sup>13</sup> *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You.*

<sup>14</sup> *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.*

Justification, brings blessing, the blessing of salvation.

Abraham was justified only by faith, David was justified only by faith, and every believer before and after them has been justified only by faith. A sinner's faith is graciously accepted by God and counted for him as righteousness for Christ's sake.

*A story is told of a poor farmer who had saved his money for years in order to buy an ox to pull his plow. When he thought he had enough saved, he traveled a great distance to the nearest town to shop for an ox.*

*He soon discovered, however, that the paper money he had been saving had been replaced by a new currency and that the date for exchange from the old to the new had long since passed.*

*Because he was illiterate, the man asked a neighbor school boy to write a letter to the president of their country, explaining his dire situation and asking for an exemption.*

*The president was touch by the letter and wrote back to the farmer: the law must be followed, because the deadline for exchanging bills has already passed. The government can no longer change your bills for the new ones. Even the president is not exempt from this rule.*

*However, the president continued, because I believe that you really worked hard to save this money, I am changing your money for the new money from my own personal funds so that you will be able to buy your ox.*

Before God, every person's good works are as worthless as that farmer's outdated money. But God Himself, in the Person of His Son, has paid the debt. And when a confessed sinner casts himself on God's mercy and accepts in faith the Lord's atoning work in his behalf, he can stand forgiven and divinely righteous before Him.

We have been watching Paul as he lays out the case for justification by faith and faith alone. Next we will see how Paul brings grace into the picture.