

Romans 4:1-8

Proof of the Gospel of Grace from Abraham and David

Romans chapter 4 verses 1 through 8:

- 1) What therefore shall we say then that Abraham our father, has found according to the flesh?**
- 2) For if Abraham were justified out of works, he has something to boast; but not before God.**
- 3) For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited - that is what *accounted* means - it was credited to him for righteousness.**
- 4) And to the one who is working** - notice *working* is a participle, habit of life. **To the one who is working** - using an illustration in the human realm, this would be all of us - **and to the one who is continuously working the wage, the wage is not credited according to grace, but according to debt.** That is, at the end of the week we expect to get paid because we put in our work. But spiritually,
- 5) But to the one not working** (in the spirit realm) **but believing upon the One justifying the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.**
- 6) Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man, to whom God credits righteousness apart from works,**
- 7) Saying, "Blessed are those whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**
- 8) "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not credit sin."**

Paul has spent the first part of Romans, Romans chapter 1 verse 18 through chapter 3 verse 20... and Romans chapter 3 verse 21 on to the end of chapter 5 we are studying about the Doctrine of Justification. The first one was the Doctrine of Condemnation. How the whole world stands guilty before God. But he spends most of his time emphasizing that to the Hebrew or Jewish person who held the wrong approach and the wrong theology. That because they were Hebrews or Jews and God's promised people and chosen people that they automatically had secure for them a place in heaven throughout eternity.

So Paul spent a little bit of time on the heathen, the pagans. That is you and me. God's Spirit ministers to us through creation because we do not have the law. We were not raised under the law, the Torah, like the Jewish people were. So God ministers to us through conscience about creation that there is a God. And we can either respond to that light or reject it. If we respond He draws us into more information and knowledge about Him. If we reject it, He reveals no more to us.

We saw last Thursday night in our study of the book of Acts as Paul preached there were those who were persuaded that came and joined themselves to him and to Silas. But then there were the Jews who were refusing to be persuaded, and that is how the text literally is translated.

They refused that persuasion. And it was a persuasion. That is why they were fighting against it. It is so persuasive but they said no. So for the Gentile it is ministering through creation to our conscience. For the Jew and Hebrew person it is ministering to them through the law. But they said, "Wait a minute, we already have the law."

But even the Lord's ministry when He came in Matthew chapter 5 He said, **I did not come to destroy the law I came to fulfill it.** But He also presented to the Hebrew and Jewish person the correct interpretation of the law. "You have heard from the law though shalt not kill," Jesus said, "but I say unto you, if you have anger toward your brother you have killed him already." Jesus said, "Sin comes from out of the heart." And the heart of man is sinful even from birth. David says that even when he was conceived in the womb he was conceived in sin. He acquired his sin nature as soon as he was conceived in the womb.

So Paul spent much of the time convincing or persuading the Hebrew or Jewish person that just because they are Hebrew and Jewish they are not off the hook. That they will be judged the same way that the Gentile is judged. Even more so because they already have the law and the law should have convicted them that they are sinners. But they took the law as religious and social. "Well, I have never killed anybody." And Jesus says, "It is spiritual." Paul is going to tell us that later on in Romans. The law is good and it is spiritual, it is to drive people to Christ. In other words, they have had the law how many years? A few thousand years. So that when Messiah comes they could say, "Finally I am released from prison. This law that we have had has locked us up into prison, now Messiah has come to set us free." But that is not what they did. They said, "Forget Messiah." So they are still locked up. They are still in prison. Practicing their religious practices, but they are still locked up. And probably what upsets them the most is that they are locked up with Gentiles.

So Paul now begins to share with us how we can be set free. He wants to share with us the process of salvation. This is called the Doctrine of Justification, chapters 4 and 5. As we said the first hour the word *justify* means *to be right with God*. And to be right with God means to be lined up with His holiness, His person, His nature, which I cannot do. But we will see in chapter 5 verse 1 that **we have been justified by faith in Christ.**

Jesus Christ, according to Paul in I Corinthians chapter 1 verses 30 and 31 that Jesus Christ is my righteousness. That I am right with God through Jesus Christ, because He is the one who is right. I am not.

So he asked the question in verse 1. He starts us off by saying, **What therefore shall we say then that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?** That last little phrase *according to the flesh* is found in different places in the verse depending upon which translation you have. Some translation says, "What shall we say then that Abraham our father according to the flesh has found?" That is our father from the human ascendancy standpoint. But I have given you the word order, *what Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?* That is, as he lived out his life, what did he find out from a human fleshly standpoint? There are three things.

First of all, from the human standpoint out of works, what did he find out? Verse 2, **For if Abraham were justified out of works**, notice the translation, out of as a source. **If he were justified from out of works he has something to boast; but not before God.** In other words, he could go around telling people, boast about himself.

Some of your translations have the word *glory*. That is a different word, this is the word *boasting*. He can't boast before God but he can boast before people. "Look what I have done! You want to get blessed? You want to have the promises of God ministered to you and over you? Then do what I do. Keep the law like I do. Keep the rules like I do." So, he would have something to boast about.

Well, when I read Abraham's life - and this is from a standpoint of, very interesting how the Bible treats God's people, first of all. And second of all, how He looks at us. Because if you go back and read Abraham's life, I would say, "This guy is a mook." He cannot be the father of the faith and those of the faith that is for sure. He messed up all over the place. Lied about his wife. Seemingly did not trust God. Took things into his own hands. But you read the New Testament about him, it does not say anything about that. It says, "Well, he trusted God." Interesting, that is how God looks at us. Not the human failing perspective but the faithfulness of God's Spirit. See, because if I am of the faith I am under the influence and persuasion of His Spirit therefore God accepts me. But Abraham would not be able to boast in front of God. In front of man? Yes. But in front of God? No.

How are you going to boast to God? "Well God, out of the 613 commandments that You gave us in the Torah, I kept three. Well, I tried. I did not keep the three all the time." How do you boast to God that you lived a life equal to His holiness? You cannot.

Secondly, the contrast here. **For what does the scripture say?** Verse 3. It says, **Abraham believed God, and it was accounted (or credited) to him for righteousness.** That is Genesis chapter 15 verse 6. Let me want to point out a couple things to you that maybe in your reading you did not notice. In quoting Genesis chapter 15 verse 6 it says, **Abraham believed God.** It does not say, *Abraham believed God's word.* It does not say, *Abraham believed God's promises.* It says, **Abraham believed God.** Basically, what he said was, "Okay, whatever you say, whatever you do, I believe God."

It is a simple direct response and yet it is the simplicity that is presented to us. We can argue over what the Bible says; we can wrestle with do we believe what God's word says, especially when sometimes we do not understand it or it is confusing. But when it comes right down to it, I believe God. Period. Point-blank statement. I might be confused about the word. I might be confused about my circumstances. I might be wrestling with a lot of issues. But, I believe God. I believe He is in charge.

In fact, that is one of the things in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6, that those who please God must live by faith. You must believe that He is God. I find that even for the most minute thing that I am dealing with, if I do not approach it from a standpoint that God is in charge, this is what He is doing, this is what He wants, then that is my problem. Not the circumstance. Whatever

the Bible says or does not say, whatever I do not know, whatever is confusing for me, or whatever is just not made clear, I can still trust God. Period.

Abraham believed God. So we find out that was not Abraham's problem. Do you know what Abraham's problem was? He believed God, but it took God too long to do what He was going to do. In other words, he looked at the promise and he says, "God promised that I would have a son. Fifteen years later I do not have a son. What is the deal?" So he goes into Hagar, Sarah's handmaid; she gives birth to Ishmael and Abraham says, "Thank you, Lord, I have my son." And God says, "Nope. You have just created the Mideast nightmare." And God says to him, "When I promise you a son, I provide it by promise not by works." So can you see the difference between promise and works? Between faith and works? Because what we are trying to attain in this earthly life, what we are trying to attain spiritually is what God has already promised. But we keep being told we do not have it. Yeah, you do. Sure we do.

I cannot satisfy all of your doubts and all of your confusion about specifics but I can tell you, God never changes. Do you realize that back in the days of the prophets, Peter tells us that they prophesied about things that they themselves would never get to experience. What if God made a promise to me and I am waiting. Boy, what a wasted life if I die and go, "I never experienced the promise, what happened? Been waiting 60 years, what happened?" That does not mean God is any less God. That does not mean it is not going to happen. But I have my expectations here from my human standpoint.

Abraham believed God. Not what He said. Not what He is going to do. He believed God.

I have found the greatest spiritual response that I can make to God is, "Whatever."

God comes to Abraham and says, "You are going to bear a child." Abraham takes in consideration all the circumstances, especially since time has gone on so long that they are not able to bear children anymore. Now, that is a problem. "Why did not God fulfill His promise when physically we were able to have children? Now we cannot even have children, so how is God going to do that?" And God basically reveals just the opposite. "Well, I was waiting for you not to be able to bear children." Oh that makes sense. What, do we to hit Egyptian adoption agencies? You know, what do we do? And God's message is, "I waited for you to not have the physical ability so that when you bear a child it will be all credited to Me, not you."

I find that a lot. I have found that a lot from the older believers, the elders, elderly people who are in Christ. That God waits for us to get to the end of our earthly journey to really pour out God's word and His Spirit. Why? Because physically we get unable to do the works of God for Him. You know, you get tired. You work the system. You work the church system. You just get tired. And you sit back and you say, "God, I just do not want to do that anymore. Sorry." And God is like, "Hey, do not apologize. Now, I can work in your life." Because your flesh is slowing down. Instead of playing basketball, you would rather take a nap.

The only thing that bums me out in his life is I still do not have a rocking chair for the porch. You know, when that becomes the major issue in your life, you know you are at the end, right?

"What are you all bummed out about?"

"I do not have a rocking chair for my porch. My day is ruined."

Because you slow down. You lose the ambition. You realize that whatever you wanted to accomplish, and whatever you wanted to do from an earthly perspective, you have already done it because now it is too late. That part of life is over. And the Lord waits for us to do our thing all these years. Do whatever we are going to do, until we come before Him and say, "Okay, I am done."

Even with Gideon, you remember God wanted to raise up a leader for Israel to lead them against the Philistines? Gideon is kind of my man. He is left-handed.

If I had to choose a baseball team they would be all left-handed, even the catcher. Did you know they used to have a left-handed catcher's glove? Dale Long I think was the last one in the major leagues to be a left-handed catcher. I knew you would be excited about that. I am just full of statistics, just come to church.

Gideon was left-handed. He is working at the mill and God says, "Gideon, I am going to use you to lead." And Gideon says, "Oh no, no. Nuh-huh. Not me." He began to put out fleeces, "Well, I am not too sure that is God." God stooped down to show him even through putting a fleece out that he is to go. So finally he says, "Okay." God says, "Round up all the able-bodied men." Thirty-two thousand Israelite men showed up for war. "Oh yeah! Thirty-two thousand to go out there against the Philistines." God says, "Too many." How can you have too many? Right? If you have thirty-two thousand the Philistines only have five thousand, that is pretty good odds, I like that. So God says, "Tell all of the thirty-two thousand, tell them anybody that wants to go home and does not want to fight, you can go home." Now they are down to ten thousand. Now Gideon is starting to get a little nervous. God says, "Go down to the river, ask them all to drink and those who drink a certain way, send them home and use everybody else." So in the end Gideon is looking at three hundred men. That is it. See, I would have said, "God, this is a setup. I should have said no to begin with and stuck with it." And God said the reason He did that is because He did not want it to be the strength of the numbers and the people that would give God the glory, but it would be God himself through an impossible situation.

So with three hundred men God went out and under His instruction Gideon went out and they defeated the Philistines. And there was no doubt, nobody had any doubt. You have a leader that does not want to do it. You have three hundred people that said, "If I knew I had to drink a certain way, you would send me home, I would probably drink that way." But God miraculously defeated the Philistines. Who gets the glory? He does. What if God eliminated everybody but Gideon? Oh that would have been nice.

Like Paul says in Romans chapter 8, **If God before us who can be against us?** Well, how about five thousand Philistines? If God only wanted to use one person, He would kill them all. Who would get the glory? God would. Because it is humanly impossible and that is what God does.

If you read the Gospel of Luke, Luke charts out the life of Jesus from a human standpoint. Luke being a physician. But if you ever notice that every couple chapters, he puts a little physician summary about how He grew older and in grace with man and God, and physically he became older. And at the age of thirty, I mean why not twenty-five? I mean how does God have to be, before he can be God? Officially. "Hey, I am twenty-seven and a half but I am still God." Because at the age of thirty that is when men were able to enter into the priesthood. So He grew in age. He grew in size. He grew in physical maturity and in grace with God and man. Luke was charting the human growth and health and patterns of the Lord.

And God works that way. If you ever talk to somebody who has been walking with the Lord for many, many, many, many years, they will tell you, the reason why God waits is that He waits for it to be impossible for us, so that He will get the glory. Or we could be like Abraham according to the flesh we can say, "Well, at the age of thirty-five, I found this principle in the Bible that I practice and look at God's blessings!" Everybody gives you \$39.95 to attend your seminar and find out how that principle works. But I am telling them how to work it. That is witchcraft.

We studied last Thursday night about the sons of Skiva. They saw Paul casting out demons and so they said, "Hey, this guy has get power. What is the formula? Oh, in the name of Jesus." So they go around praying in the name of Jesus. The demon said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I am acquainted with, but who are you?" That is what the demon said. And I would been [imitates stuttering]. The demon jumped on him. Jumped on them all, beat them up, tore their clothes off and they went running out naked and beat up. Using the Lord's name in formula form, that is witchcraft. There is no special thing happening when you mention or say His name that He is obligated to release power every time you say His name. The reason why the disciples used the name of Jesus is because it was Jesus the one who is doing it. Not using it as a formula.

So Abraham could not boast of anything physical that he found according to the flesh. But rather the Bible tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness.

The word *counting* or *accounting* that we have in some of our English Bibles it is an accounting term. And it says we have a ledger before God and there are two columns. One column is the debt and the other column is the payment. When we sin against God it is a debt that we have to pay. And we are faced our entire life with figuring out how we are going to pay that debt and it is mounting.

But to Abraham it was credited to him for righteousness. You look on Abraham's ledger and it says, "Paid in full." Why? Because he believed God. Very simple. We need to keep studying the word. We need to keep seeking the Lord. We need to keep seeking to understand His ways. But living life is not dependent upon getting answers. Living life is dependent upon believing God. Not in Him. Not about Him. Him. I believe God. Period.

Either I am reacting to my life and my life's issues and situations because God is no longer God, or God is not doing it right, or I am not believing God.

Secondly, in verse 4 he says, **And to the one working the wage is not credited according to grace, but according to debt.** So the first thing we saw out of works what did Abraham find according to the flesh? Out of works. The best you can do is boast to other people, but not before God because before God it does not mean anything. This is out of debt. Using our human analogy when you go to work, you put in your time, when it comes to get paid you get paid for that time. Basically that employer has a debt, he has to pay you the debt. You put in the time, you have to get paid for it. But it is not according to grace.

Now I had somebody do that when I had my gardening business. A Christian woman. Mowed her lawn. Made a deal, forty dollars a month. Okay. Mowed her lawn. We sent out billing statements with self-addressed stamped envelopes. No excuse, right? They can either hand it to me when I am there or they can mail it. They cannot say, "I did not have any stamps." I mean, it is all ready, right there. Two weeks late. Three weeks late. A whole month late. Now we are billing for two months instead of just one. A week late again. So I decide to knock on the door. She is all cheerful and bubbly. I said, "Well, I just want to know if you have received the lawn bills?"

"Oh yes. Yes."

"Well, we have not received payment."

She says, "I do not have the money."

"Well, if you did not have the money, why did you not tell me that?"

Because basically it is a debt. She owes me that money, right? I put in the work, she owes me the money. She told me that I need to learn how to live by faith. See, that is like her saying, "I am working for wages. Here is the amount I want to get for my work." It is agreed upon and then going to them and saying, "Well, your payment is grace." Wonderful.

But literally, **The person who is working the wage is not accredited according to grace but according to debt.** It is a debt. But spiritually it is just the opposite. See, this is where we get our false philosophy from. Our society dictates that if you put in the time and the work than somebody is in debt to you for the wage for that work. So that if I go to church and I work for God He is indebted to me. He goes to judge me, I say, "Oh, I got a bill right here. I put in three thousand hours of church work so if You are going to judge me You have to pay Your bill." It does not work that way.

But spiritually, in contrast - you notice the same thing with Abraham, there was a contrast. Verse 5, **And to the one not working** - he is not talking about the unemployed - **to the person who is not working in the human realm for God, but is believing upon the One who is justifying the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.** Credited. I believe God. I

believe God provided everything for my sin. Everything that He says, I believe Him. Everything that He has done, I believe Him. Everything that He is going to do, I believe Him. And if He does not keep His word and He violates all that I know Him to be, then we are all sunk. But He is not like that.

Thirdly - first of all, we saw out of works according to the human; then we saw according to the human out of debt, neither one of those work before God. After using Abraham, now it is David. (verse 6) **Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man.** So we have ministry from the life of Abraham from the physical line of descendency and now from the royal line, from David. He describes the blessedness of the man. The word *blessed* is the same word used in the Sermon on the Mount: *Blessed is the man.* μακάριος (makarios) is the Greek word and it means *to experience the fullness of something.* So for God to bless me it means approach God in life this way and you will experience all the fullness of who He is. I already have Him in His fullness, but I get distracted and do not experience all the fullness of who He is.

David describes the blessedness of this man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. The term *apart from* means *separate from*. It denotes they do not even mix. It does not come close. They do not work together. That is just it. Works and faith are opposites. **To whom God credits righteousness apart from works.** Now, how would you like it if you had a mounting bill at a physician's office or something? You had no insurance, no way to pay for it, and that bill just kept getting longer and longer and longer. They have to hire an auditor or a bookkeeper just to keep track of your own account. Just you. It takes all day to just keep writing everything down. And the office were to call you up and say, "Do you believe that Jesus died for you?"

"Uh, yeah."

"You do not owe us anything."

"Really?!"

God credits righteousness apart from works. A quote from Psalm 32 verses 1 and 2, (verse 7) **Saying, Blessed are those whose lawlessness's are forgiven.** That is everybody who has violated God's law. **Blessed are those people whose lawlessnesses are forgiven and whose sins are covered.** Jew and Gentile. (verse 8) **Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not credit sin.** Yeah, I would say that person is blessed.

If you were to ask the question, who would be the most blessed person on the face of the earth? What would be their circumstances? Who would they be? What country would they live in? The Bible says the most blessed person in life is the person that has had righteousness credited to their account instead of sin. Therefore, because of that I can experience and interact with the fullness of all that God is. And He lives inside of me. I do not have to keep my eye on Him and make sure He does not slip out the door. He is inside of me all the time. That person can say they are the most blessed person on the face of the earth. The sin issue has been taken care of. My debt with God has been taken care of through Jesus Christ. That allows me to interact with the true living God. Learn about Him. Grow close to Him. Be changed by His

presence and His influence over my life and experience all the fullness of who He is. I have nowhere to go. I have nothing to do in life to be blessed because I have everything inside of me. Where am I going? Well if go to the Panama Canal? You know, try to get a job on a ship, I will be a happy man. We have everything. The sin issue has been taken care of by faith and we are blessed people.

So coming on Thanksgiving, this would be good thing for all of our families to thank God for, how blessed we are. We might not have all of our health. We might not have the wealth that we would like to have. We might not live where we would like to live or be doing what we want to do, that would really make us happy, whatever that is. But we are the most blessed people on the face of the earth. Our sins have been forgiven. Jesus Christ paid the debt of our sin. So that you and I can interact with the living God and the sin issue has been taken care of. I can grow in Him. I can grow close to Him. Let His Spirit and life influence my life, my person, and my character. No hindrance.

How much access did we have with President Bush? Or how much access do we have to President Obama? I have direct access to the throne of God. Wow. Nobody is going to say, "Give me your number, give me your Social Security number, I will switch over to his office." I can come directly to the throne of God. And the only way I can approach God is through Jesus Christ, because the sinner that I am, and my sin has been paid for by Christ on the cross. And that opens up the opportunity for me to receive salvation as a gift because it has already been paid. It gives me the opportunity to, like I say, interact with God, learn of Him, walk with Him. Because He sees His Son in me and it is through His Son that I can have this relationship with the Creator of the universe. That is a very blessed thing.

So maybe this Thanksgiving we can remember to stop and thank God for the blessings that He has poured out upon us, not physically but spiritually. And that we just need to learn that I am self-contained. I do not need to look anywhere else. I do not need to go anywhere else. I do not need to do anything else. I have everything inside of me that I need. I am self-contained. And the moment we stop looking outwardly and look inwardly where Christ dwells we will experience all the fullness of His presence and His person and we will be at peace. But it is all by faith, not by works.

Let's close with prayer.