

Romans 4

“Righteousness from God - Illustrated”

5/16/12

Introduction

- The Content of Romans is not hard to understand
 - As long as you remember it is helpful to compare the content of Romans to a great theological city

The Book of Romans – The Great Theological City

#1 – The Courthouse – Romans 1-5

- Paul introduces the concept of righteousness by faith, but in order to show us our great need of salvation he spend the first five chapters showing are we are all guilty before God

#2 – The Power Plant – Romans 6-8

- Chapters 6-8 help us understand that is power to live out this Christian life God is calling us to – Pastor Rob is doing an in-depth series from these three chapters on our weekend services, but we will cover them as well, just at a much more rapid pace

#3 – The Synagogue – Romans 9-11

- in chapters 9-11 Paul shares with us how Israel fits into God plan now that there is this new thing called the church and answers the questions, has the church replaced Israel, where do they fit into God’s plan and how does God’s sovereignty fit with man’s free will – great stuff in this section

#4 – The Church – Romans 12-16

- in Paul’s final section of this book we will study how the church is practically suppose to operate in light of the all the amazing truths about God is this book – Paul ends all of his letters very practically Romans is no exception

Now we are still in that first building, in the Courthouse, where Paul has been showing us we are all guilty before the Lord and we are all in need of a savior

- and now that we have that down, last week Paul shared with us some of the most important verses in all the Bible – teaching us about the Righteousness from God
 - now Paul presentation of this upmost in important Bible truth breaks down as follows

Righteousness from God – Defined – Romans 3:21-31

Righteousness from God – Illustrated – Romans 4

Righteousness from God – Explained – Romans 5

- Last week we really defined what righteousness from God is and you can get that study free online, download it as a podcast from I-tunes or free DVD – no excuse
 - Tonight we are going to see this truth of Righteousness from God Illustrated

And what Paul is doing here in Romans chapter 4 is so important

- because to the Jews who really believed that keeping the law was the way to approach God, they would wonder, Paul is this some new thing, some new thing you have come up with

I was reading in Newsweek a little over a year ago about an article from their music reviewer and editor and this guy’s young son came to him and said, Dad I found the greatest new band. What is the new band son? Oh you probably wouldn’t like them because they are a new kind of cool. What the band’s name son – The Beatles. It was when they had just finally decided to allow their music on I-Tunes (which by the way is two I-Tunes references in less than 5 minutes, I should get some royalties) – this kid thought this is a new band

But I remember being taught something in Bible college and that was, while you are studying your Bible – if you come across something that is new, it is not true and if it really is true, then it is not new, it might be new to you, but others have seen it before

- the Jews were thinking – Paul this sounds like some new teaching
 - you see you have to understand where the normal Jewish believer was coming from

The Mishnah, a very important book in Jewish theology and teaching taught them, “we find that Abraham our father had performed the whole law before it was given” – Kiddushin 4:4

- and from the book of Jubilees...

“For Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord and well-pleasing in righteousness all the day of his life” – Jewish Book of Jubilees

- really, what Bible were they reading - and if that wasn't bad enough from another Jewish source of teaching, the Prayer of Manasses..

“Thou, therefore O Lord, that art the God of righteousness hast not appointed repentance unto the righteous Abraham” – The Prayer of Manasses

- this in old King James English is saying, Abraham never needed to repent
 - what??? – what about that little incident with “tell them you are my sister”, not once but twice or the whole thing with Hagar
- But no matter our opinion, the Jewish people as you can see would have thought, they were taught, Righteousness doesn't come from God, it is earned as I keep all the Law like Abraham did
 - Abraham was justified by works and therefore is an example to follow. Case Closed!
- Paul however would say, hold on, case not closed

And Paul is going to spend chapter 4 of the book of Romans illustrating the truth of Righteousness from God by using the very man many Jewish teachers used to teach righteousness by works – Father Abraham

- He is going to show in this chapter that Righteousness from God is not some new teaching
 - But the same way Abraham, the Father of the Jewish people was saved
 - And Paul does this, you note takers by building a three part argument

How was Abraham Saved? - Romans Chapter 4

#1 – By Faith, not Works – Romans 4:1-8

#2 – By Grace, not the Law – Romans 4:9-17

#3 – By God's power, not Human Effort – Romans 4:18-25

- so lets examine each of these one at a time

How was Abraham Saved? - Romans Chapter 4

#1 – By Faith, not Works – Romans 4:1-8

- Paul in beginning to prove that Abraham was saved the same way we are in the New Testament church calls two witnesses to prove this statement, Moses and David

He calls Moses, who of course wrote the book of Genesis, and in the book of Genesis, Moses tells us of Abraham of whom God said in Genesis 15:6

And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” – Genesis 15:6

- God accounted Abraham's belief in God or faith in God to Him as righteousness

“Accounted” means transfer from one to another

- It is like those of you who work somewhere with direct deposit – the money that used to be in the account of Wal-Mart or City of Vista's account, is put into yours – transferred from on to another

Now the illustration breaks down because for most of us, you do some work for that company, for that entity, so you have earned the transfer

- but Paul is showing us that we receive this transfer of Righteousness from God to us apart from work
 - that is true for us, that was true of Abraham
 - and the evidence in the story

The context of Genesis 15 is Lot, Abraham Nephew, and the people of the city he was living in, was taken captive by a coalition of Kings

- Abraham takes 300 armed men in his house hold and they go to battle and a great victory is won
 - So often as it is in our lives, as it was in Elijah life after his great battle on Mount Carmel, a let down follows a victory
- And for Abraham that let down comes after the battle, after the encounter with Melchizedek, Abraham is alone with God and God says to Him...
 - I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward

Now most of us would love to hear that from God

- I am protecting you, I am your reward, your inheritance
 - And normally so would have Abraham, but he was having a down day and said to the Lord
 - What good is your reward if I can't pass it on to a son, to an heir
- You see, you Bible students know the story, Abraham was wealthy, he was blessed of the Lord, but he had no children, no one to pass it onto
 - And in that culture, that was devastating
 - And So Abraham says – big deal, you are my reward, who am I going to pass that reward onto

And instead of being mad at Abraham who was having a little tantrum, lets be honest about what happening here, God makes Abraham a promise

- Abraham I am going give you a son, in fact, He has Abraham go outside and consider the night sky and says, if you can number the stars, then you will be able to number how many people are going to descend from you
 - That was a crazy promise – Abraham, at least in his 80's at this point in life – no kids, God says, I am going to give you so many descendants, that they will be innumerable
 - Pretty huge promise from God
- But Abraham didn't balk at God's promise, Genesis 15 tells us Abraham believed God
 - Abraham took God at His Word, He believed God's promise

And because of that, because of Abraham's belief in what God had said, because of His faith in God's Word – God transferred, Righteousness from His Account to Abraham's

- it was because of belief, it was because of faith
 - it wasn't because of works
 - Abraham was having a tantrum at the time – I have no children, I have no one to pass my things onto
- If your child was behaving like Abraham was at the time he was given this amazing promise, you would get out the board of education and apply it to the seat of understanding – your kid would have earned a spanking
 - But God, apart from Abraham's works, imparted Righteousness to His account, because of faith
 - Because Abraham trusted in what God said

Now the second witness was Paul calls to the stand to show salvation has always been about faith and not works was David

- Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 which David wrote in response to the joy he felt when God had forgiven him on his sin with Bathsheba

David was a man after God's own heart, but not in this season of his life

- in fact when you consider David's act of adultery and the cover up that followed, the Murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah, David broke almost every one of the 10 commandments
 - And yet God forgave Him

Now understand how huge this ways

- The Old Testament law had no sacrifices for such premeditated sin, do you realize that
 - There were things you could do if you sinned without knowing it, couldn't keep a vow that you should have kept
 - But if you decided to premeditatedly sin, which we have all done, there was no sacrifice that brought forgiveness

So knowing this David cries out, Psalm 51:16-17

“For You do not desire sacrifice or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart - These, O God, You will not despise.” – Psalm 51:16-17

There were no sacrifices David could offer, so in other words it was by faith, by believing God was going to save him, forgive him, take righteousness from Himself and account to David's account, that David was saved and cleansed

- And Friends, what was true of Abraham and David is true for you and me as well

God reaches out to us, when, after we have done some great thing?

- after we have made Him proud?
 - No – we will see next week...

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:8

- God reached out to us, when we like Abraham were having a tantrum, when we like David were breaking commandment after commandment
 - And God shared with us, like He shared with them, You can not save yourself, but I want to provide righteousness for you
 - Believe in that promise and when we did – Righteousness was taken from the account of God and put in Jason Duff's account and your account here tonight
- This is not some new teaching, we see it illustrated all through the Old testament
 - Righteousness from God is by faith, not works

How was Abraham Saved? - Romans Chapter 4

#1 – By Faith, not Works – Romans 4:1-8

#2 – By Grace, not the Law – Romans 4:9-17

- The Jews gloried in the law and in the sign of the covenant, in the sign of the law, circumcision

Abraham was told by God in Genesis chapter 17, at age 99, I am going to make a covenant with you Abraham

- I am going to bless you, and be with you and multiple you
 - And the sign of that covenant that you are mine?
 - Yes – Lord – you want me to conquer a city, you want me build a tower???

Nope – I want you to cut off the foreskin of your flesh as an outward sign of an inward reality – the flesh has been cut away from your spiritual heart and now physically you are to cut away your flesh as well

- and classic Abraham, doesn't question, doesn't balk at the command of God – most of us no doubt would have, you want me to do what???
 - But Abraham and his whole house hold obey

- And from that moment on, the symbol of circumcision is the standard for what makes you a Jew, a follower of God

To which the Jews in Paul's days would say, those Gentile they are not saved, they are not even circumcised

- they need to do at least that act, that bit of work Paul if they are going to be saved?
 - But Paul points out that not only was Abraham saved way before the law which came in Exodus 20, hundreds of years after the Life of Abraham but more than that, Abraham was saved, before he was even circumcised

You see remember from our first point tonight, that Abraham was saved in Genesis 14 when God accounted him as righteous

- And when you put the timing of these events together Romans comes alive
 - This by the way is why it is so important even in this age of Grace to be a student of the Old Testament –the Old Testament makes the truths of the New Testament come alive
- I personally and I'm praying through starting to go through the Old Testament here on Wednesday Night, starting in Genesis and just working our way through, we'll see how the Lord leads on that

But anyway back to our text, realizing that Genesis 14, when Abraham was saved was at least 14 years before Genesis 17 when Abraham was circumcised, that means...

- To a Jewish mind, Abraham was a gentile when he was saved, Paul is basically saying, put that in your pipe and think about a while
 - The Jews held Abraham up as the prototype Jew who was saved by keeping the Law and being circumcised
- Paul is saying, Abraham was a Gentile when he was saved by faith and grace, not works and Law

Again the picture, it has always been about faith, and grace and mercy

- Humankind has never approached God on the basis of their works
 - In fact – speaking of Illustrations of this, last week in the One Year Bible we were reading of how the Ark of the Covenant was lost in battle for a time to the Philistines
- The people of Israel were being beaten by the Philistines and so the Elders among themselves why is this happening
 - And instead of thinking maybe it is our sinful hearts, they conclude, it is because the Ark needs to come with us into battle
 - So they bring the Ark to the battle field and the Philistines are afraid of this box that defeated the Egyptians and parted the Red Sea, so they encourage one another to fight like me
 - And they defeat Israel – they secret wasn't the box, sometime the elders are right
- So they take the Ark back to the five cities of the Philistines and stick it in the temple with their Dagon and I love it, I just love this part of 1 Samuel..

The Next morning they come into the temple of Dagon and there he is with his hands and head fallen off, just prostrate before the Ark – Dagon is worshipping

- so the Philistines says – Dag gon it – sorry I can't resist and they prop old Dagon up again and the next day the same thing happens
 - on top of this, every city the ark comes too people start breaking out in tumors and apparently there was a rat infestation, and the Elder of the Philistines realize, the Ark doesn't not belong with us
- Lets put it on a cart, and have some young oxen start walking in the direction of Israel and see if God wants it back in Israel
 - And the Oxen start heading to Israel, the Bible says, lowing as they went

Well when it comes back into Israeli territory it comes first to the town of Bethshemesh

- and the people of Israel are overjoyed, the ark is back, and they sacrifice the oxen as a offering of thanksgiving to God and everything is wonderful
 - until a group of them, decide to open the ark, they take off the lid, known in the scripture as what, who remembers? – the Mercy Seat – they take off the Mercy Seat and if you remember 50,070 people die
 - that is huge – why – what in the world
- Because again the picture friend, these people of Bethshemesh tried to approach God, to be in the presence of God without the Mercy Seat
 - By works, by law and God says significantly and clearly – NO
 - You approach me by Mercy, by grace, by faith, there is no other way Old or New Testament

Abraham was saved by grace, by faith, not works and the Law, while he was a Gentile man

- this makes him not just the father of the Jewish people but everyone Jew and Gentile that receives righteousness by faith alone
 - well one more picture of this and we will be done tonight...

How was Abraham Saved? - Romans Chapter 4

#1 – By Faith, not Works – Romans 4:1-8

#2 – By Grace, not the Law – Romans 4:9-17

#3 – By God's power, not Human Effort – Romans 4:18-25

- with Abraham it was clear that God's promise to Abraham was not going to be fulfilled by his own effort – it was only going to be done through the power of God

Romans 4 lets us know that Abraham did not consider the age of his body, being 99 years old

- that doesn't mean Abraham didn't realize he was old and unable to have children
 - it means that Abraham did not let his inability make him question God's ability to do what God had promised
- And again – this trusting that God is going to do what God promised to do is what Salvation by faith is all about

We have to agree with God – I can't – I can't save myself, I can't figure out how to be perfect in your sight

- But Lord I believe you are going to save me, I believe what you did on the cross is sufficient to deal with the debt I owe
- And acknowledging that it is by God's power, God's effort, God work and not your own power and work and effort that you are saved is what saving faith is all about and has always been about

And by the way, I find it so interesting that in order to teach Abraham this lesson, God allowed Abraham to come to very end of Himself

- you see what I mean?
 - If Abraham had received this promise of children at age 40, well he would have said, ah Lord why did you wait so long, but great, I can't wait to tell Sarah my wife, she will be so blessed of what "we" are going to do
 - If Abraham was told this as 55 – wow God, I don't know how 'we' are going to handle and little baby, we are getting up there, I don't know how "we" are going to do this

But no, God waits until he is 99, and Abraham response has to be, Lord I believe you, but you know if you don't show up and do this, there is no way

- and I wrap this study up tonight with this, which doesn't have everything to do with our study on Righteousness from God
 - but its from the text here in Romans 4

Abraham was convinced that what God had promised God was able to perform

- not what God has promised, Abraham would find a way to get done, I am your man God you can count on me
 - it was not what God had promised, Abraham would perform
- It was simply what God had promised, Abraham believed God was going to get done
 - As ridiculous as the situation looked

And what God with Abraham and Sarah, He still does with you and me

- and He often waits, because earlier in our lives, or in previous circumstances, we might think – Lord great promise, I will get right on that

We might think God that is lofty goal, but you picked that right guy, the right gal, just wait and see

- So God because we can be little think and somehow think that His work in our lives is our doing
 - He lets us get to a point as He did with Abraham, that the only way this is going to work...
 - The only way this marriage is going to survive
 - The only way this child is coming back to you
 - The only way we are going make it through
- Is if you show up God
 - And so my trust and my rest is fully dependant upon you
 - My trust in not in the fact, I can get this done, it is in who is promising this to me

And what true in life experiences is true with Salvation

- Without the evidence presented in the courthouse of God we would be tempted to think, I got this salvation thing God, I am really growing up, I am really maturing
 - I will be able to deal with my sin nature soon

But God takes us to the point to realize, Lord this is your work, if you don't save me, I am not savable

- but you have promised that your work on the cross and my simple receiving of it is sufficient
 - and so God I believe that, I rest fully upon that
 - by faith, not work
 - by grace, not law
 - by your power to save me, not my own strength
- It is how we are saved
 - And hopefully you see the picture tonight, it has how men and women have always been saved