

God Justifies the Ungodly

(Rom 4:4-8)

- Read Rom 4:1-8
- I. Rom 4:4-8- Paul expands upon the points he has just proven:
 - A) Abraham's salvation was not by merit, otherwise he could boast before God
 - B) The scripture (Gen 15:6) plainly says Abraham was "counted" righteous
 - 1. Rom 4:4- Paul states a fact plainly known and accepted by all men
 - i. Payment for work performed is not gracious, it is owed
 - ii. If a man has performed a work agreed upon, and the 2nd party does not pay that man, then the 2nd party is not only unrighteous, but a criminal
 - iii. This is the nature of the covenants of men: I've done my agreed part, now you must do yours
 - 2. Remember the Jew held Abraham in high esteem, and believed he was worthy of his salvation and position in God's administration
 - i. Now what Paul has just proven is that the fact that his righteousness was "counted" unto him means it could in no way have been merited or earned, otherwise the scripture would have said it was "paid him" or "rewarded him"
 - a) Thus the conclusion about Abraham's salvation has got to be that he in no way worked to obtain it, but it was instead a gift
 - 1) Now this is going to bring us to the next point Paul must make:
- II. Rom 4:5- God justifies the ungodly
 - A) The apostle Paul is more clear about justification by faith than any other writer in the bible, and yet here in this verse he reaches the pinnacle of statements concerning the subject
 - B) Remember the Jew believed Abraham was a "good" man and thus warranted his salvation, and so what Paul is now going to prove is that God doesn't justify "good" men, but ungodly
 - 1. This is taking his statement in ch 3 a step further:
 - i. Rom 3:26- God justifies believers
 - ii. Rom 4:5- God justifies the ungodly
 - 2. Therefore, not only has a saved man done nothing to be saved, he has in fact done everything NOT to be saved
 - i. Those God justifies are not worthy of eternal life, but actually worthy of eternal death
 - a) Compare John 8:30-47- Those Jews which trusted in their own "goodness"

- 1) When the gospel condemns the goodness of a man who has set his goodness up as an idol (by making it the grounds of God's preferment), that man is at once placed in the position of one attacked, and will lash out, offended by the cross
 - (a) Gal 5:11- The offence of the cross
- C) Proving God justifies the ungodly proves several things about justification:
 1. It is completely God's doing
 2. God doesn't make us godly and then justify us (such as Roman Catholic teaching)
 3. Justification is entirely a legal transaction, or forensic (not practical), it is a "reckoning" or an "accounting"
 - i. God does not see us righteous even though we are not righteous
 - a) That would be unrighteous of God to call evil good
 - b) God still sees the sins of his children and chastises them accordingly, and at the same time is "conforming us to His image"
 - ii. God instead "reckons" us righteous in Christ, looking to the final outcome
- III. Rom 4:6-8- Paul confirms his teaching by David's
 - A) Psa 32:1-2- Sin is still there, but not imputed to us as sin under the law, but how?
 1. 2 Cor 5:17-21- It has already been imputed to Christ
 - i. Sin, when "reckoned" as sin, mandates separation from God and the pouring out of His wrath, but the justified man is not separated when he sins, nor subject to wrath, because Christ has already been separated for him and has taken that wrath upon Himself
 - a) This is all because of the forensic act of God, His "reckoning"
 - 1) If a couple adopts a child, what would we say if they returned the child because it sinned? We would call them unrighteous, and that because they have gone against their own "reckoning" or forensic act of adoption
 2. This is exactly what David means when he speak of God not "imputing trespasses" unto him
 - i. David puts it only in the negative, Paul goes further and puts it in the positive, although the same is true in both cases
 - a) Eph 1:7- Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins
 - 1) God's forgiveness goes beyond anything man can imagine
 - (a) Not only does he not press charges against us, he reckons us righteous

(1) A man might not press charges against you, even when you are guilty, but that man will still hold it against you in his mind and heart. But not God!

ii. God's work is complete reconciliation

a) Forgiveness of sins is the 1st step

1) Phil 1:6- When God takes the 1st step, He always takes all the others also

(a) This is what the assurance of the believer is founded upon

(b) This is why David spoke of the blessedness of the forgiven man, for God has claimed Him for His Own eternally

(1) Seanna always smiles and says "you signed the papers" (forensic act, a "reckoning")

IV. Adoption (Rom 8:14-17)

A) In adoption, a child's former identity is forgotten, and they are reckoned among our own genealogy, even though they are not practically

1. The adopted child has done nothing to be adopted, their adoption is based solely on the desire and choice of the parents

i. Yet an adopted child has more rights and assurances than a natural born child

a) They are the child of their parents by a forensic act, and that can never be reversed

1) When we see this truth concerning the adoption of God, then true assurance enters and joy becomes real

(a) Imagine the case of a poor child trying to hang on to their adoption by their daily obedience, fearing the loss of it by failure

2) This truth of God's adoption does not promote carnality or laxity, it instead causes the child to begin to strive with all their might to be pleasing to the Father

(a) We truly live in ongoing repentance, and desire earnestly to work for Him, but this plays no part in our salvation

(1) Eph 2:8-10

(b) We realize we are saved by the forensic act of God- "Justification"

(1) Ask an adopted child if she belongs to her parents, and she will say "yes" and believe it with all her heart, even though she has failures and shortcomings

(2) This is because she is trusting to forensic act of the parents, and nothing of her own doing

- (3) As time goes by, she begins to even have visible confirmation of the relationship, seals of the adoption which she already has based on their forensic act (fruits)
- B) We have this same example put before us in many other ways in the scriptures
 - 1. Marriage
 - 2. Joined
 - 3. Baptized into
 - 4. Chosen
 - 5. Covenant relationship
 - 6. In the body
- C) God justifies the ungodly while he is still ungodly, and then sets about making him godly, looking always at the finished product He is certain will be brought about
 - 1. Read “Just As I Am”
 - 2. Read “Rock of Ages”