

The Significance of Grace through Faith # 11

Romans 4: 1-8

After adequately addressing the utter depravity of man and his need for salvation, Paul laid out the fundamental truths concerning salvation in our previous study. He had put to rest the idea of salvation through the law, confirming we are saved through faith in Christ alone.

Many in Paul's day sought justification through works. They were counting on their good deeds and moral living to gain acceptance to God. Some may have accepted the importance of faith, but they held to the need for works along with faith. This line of thinking remains today. Many agree faith is essential for salvation, but they also embrace the necessity of certain works as well.

To settle this debate, Paul deals with the lives of two individuals the people would've known well: Abraham and David. Abraham was widely revered by the Jews as the patriarch of their heritage and David was viewed as the great king who established the Israelite dynasty. Abraham is highly regarded among Christians, Jews, and Muslims even today. Using these men would help Paul establish the fundamental doctrine of faith in Christ alone.

Let's consider the [proofs](#) Paul offers in defense of faith as we think on: [The Significance of Grace through Faith](#).

I. The Controversy in Works (1-2) – Paul immediately addresses the faulty doctrine of acceptance being obtained through works of the flesh. Consider:

A. The Example (1) – [What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?](#) Speaking primarily to a Jewish audience at this point, Paul refers to Abraham, considered the father of the Hebrew people. He knew the people would identify with Abraham and Paul wisely sets out to reveal the faith Abraham possessed. If Paul could convince them Abraham was justified through faith, they would sense their need for faith as well.

B. The Expectation (2a) – [For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory.](#) The reader would have been familiar with the life of Abraham. He had followed God from the land of Ur to a land he had never seen. He patiently waited for the birth of Isaac for twenty five long years. After receiving the promised son, he obeyed the call of God to offer him as a sacrifice unto the Lord. Abraham had a long list of obedient, good works recorded about his life.

- Paul even admits, if justification were obtained by works, then Abraham would have great reason to be pleased with his works. He would certainly have met the standard men would have

imposed for being justified through works. If works brought acceptance to God, Abraham would have certainly passed the test. He would have been able to glory in his accomplishments.

- This expectation continues today. Many feel works are essential to salvation. They refuse to accept faith alone can save. Some demand certain religious traditions be followed, others expect certain deeds to be accomplished. Works will certainly follow salvation, but our salvation isn't obtained through works. [James 2:17-18 – Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.](#) ^[18]
[Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.](#)

C. The Exclusion (2b) – [For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.](#) Abraham had been obedient to the Lord, following His commands, and could have felt good about the works he had accomplished, but even his works could not glory before God. As we will discover, God was not impressed with the works Abraham performed; He was impressed with the faith Abraham displayed. All of Abraham's works put together would not have gained acceptance of God.

- Our faithful attendance and good deeds may gain the praise of men, but they will not translate into justification with Christ. We may be revered by others for our works, but apart from faith in Christ alone, we will continue to live in sin, separated from God. (Again, I realize that works will follow salvation. I am concerned about those who claim salvation and yet there is never any fruit in their life through works. However, I know works cannot save!)

II. The Confirmation through Faith (3-5) – Here Paul confirms justification through faith alone. Notice:

A. The Admonition (3a) – [For what saith the scripture?](#) Paul offers a simple and profound admonition. What does the Bible say about justification in regard to works and faith? He wasn't interested in Jewish tradition or the handed down beliefs of men. What had God said in His Word? What did the Lord have to say about this matter?

- That remains the standard today. The belief that works are as essential as faith is widely held and taught, but it is contrary to the Word. We must base our faith and practice on God's Word and in His Word alone!

B. The Recognition (3b) – Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Paul declares that God's Word reveals Abraham believed God (he had faith in God,) and that faith was counted unto him for righteousness. His obedient works were the direct result of unwavering faith. He would never have left his homeland had he not had faith in God. He would not have been willing to offer Isaac had he not believed God was able to raise him from the dead. Abraham was a man of great works, but his faith produced the works.

- This clearly reveals justification is obtained through faith in the Lord. Our faith in the finished work of Christ is counted for our righteousness. We obtain salvation through faith!

C. The Deception (4) – Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

Although many believed works were an act of grace and acceptance, Paul declares they are the result of a debt owed rather than grace. A works based salvation declares that God owes us justification if we work hard enough to obtain it. It places emphasis on the work of the sinner rather than the sacrifice of the Savior. Many continue to embrace this deceptive doctrine, but it is not biblical. Eph.2:8-10 – **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:** ^[9] **Not of works, lest any man should boast.** ^[10] **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.** Works follow salvation; they do not obtain it!

D. The Justification (5) – But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Again we see that faith justifies man, not works. The ungodly who have never accomplished anything of worth for the Lord through works can be saved when they look to Christ by faith! We don't have to accomplish a long list of works in order to be eligible for salvation. Faith in Christ alone brings salvation. It is obtained as a free gift by the grace of God, plus or minus nothing! It isn't faith plus works or faith minus evil deeds; it is faith alone!

III. The Consecration in Grace (6-8) – Here Paul discusses the consecration of those who respond to the offer of salvation by grace through faith. We see:

A. The Presentation of Grace (6) – Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Paul quotes Psalm 32: 1-2 – **Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.** ^[2] **Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.** This is quite significant because David penned these words after his sin with Bathsheba was brought to light and he dealt with the guilt of his sin. Clearly his works and life were not pleasing to the Lord at that point.

- Paul confirms it all of God's good grace apart from works. David had not been justified in the eyes of God because of works. In fact, his actions would've brought condemnation and judgment apart from grace. God chose to impute righteousness to David rather than impose judgment for his sin.
- The same principle applies in salvation today. Our works and the sin we have committed are worthy of death and judgment. We are guilty before God and deserving of eternal separation. This is where grace steps in. God removes the guilt and sin we have committed and replaces it with the righteousness of Christ, His Son. God's grace is nothing short of amazing! Guilty sinners have their sin exchanged for the complete righteousness of Christ!

B. The Provision of Grace (7-8) – *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* ^[8] *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* This reveals the great provision of grace in our lives. Paul points out three significant provisions:

- **Our Sins are Forgiven** – Our sins are no longer remembered against us. They are cast away, totally removed, never to be brought back into account!
- **Our Sins are Covered** – This has the idea of our sin being so completely covered that they will never be able to be uncovered. The guilt and sin of our past, present, and future are completely covered in the cleansing blood of Christ!
- **Our Sins are not Imputed** – This is a real blessing. This carries the idea of "*our sin not being placed on our account.*" There is no doubt the sin was there and we were guilty and condemned because of it. God chose to totally remove it and view it as if it were never there. The believer's sin was judged in the body of Christ the Lord as He bore our sin on the cross. Since He already paid our debt of sin, we will never be accountable for that sin!

Conclusion: Many today continue to believe works are essential for salvation. They refuse to trust in the finished work of Christ through faith alone. Our works will never be enough to secure salvation. Genuine works that bear fruit always follow salvation. If you are trusting in anything other than faith in Christ alone, you are deceived concerning salvation. If you are unsaved, why not trust the Lord by faith and find the peace He alone can give. Your work will never be complete, and it will never bring salvation. If you are saved, rejoice in what you have received in Christ!