

ROMANS SEASON 1 THE GOSPEL. OUR NEED.

CONNECT *BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- Tell of your experience with earning wages—a paycheck, allowance, etc.
 - What has been your experience with the contention that Christians are judgmental or bigoted?
 - What is something from Romans that has stuck in your mind over the course of our studies?
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TRUTH *UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING*

In our passage for today, Paul is getting to the heart of not only his primary theological thrust of his letter to the Romans—that justification is given, not earned—but also using this framework to set up some criticisms of the community of faith based on divisions of race and observance of the Law, namely circumcision. Paul deeply wishes that his readers understand that belonging to the covenant community of God is achieved only through Christ, and only through faith in him. There is no amount of obedience or good works that can justify man before a holy God.

We find ourselves in the family of God by faith, not by works

READ: Romans 4:1-8

DISCUSS: What do you think it means that Abraham's faith was "counted to him as righteousness"?

Abraham is the father of the Jewish faith. He was the patriarch through whom God's promise of a nation of people and of land came into fruition. He is also upheld as a man of righteousness and great obedience to God. However, Paul makes it very clear that not even this Patriarch, revered for his obedience was justified before God because of his works. Rather, it was Abraham's faith in God that granted him righteousness and justification.

We find ourselves in the family of God in order to be forgiven

READ: Romans 4:9-12

DISCUSS: Why do you think Paul contrasts circumcision and uncircumcision in these verses?

Paul's point here is twofold. Firstly, he is using a practical point of application for his readers—specifically his Jewish audience—regarding the matter of justification by faith apart from observance of the Law. Secondly, he is continuing to address the growing tensions between his Jewish and Gentile audiences, specifically with regard to matters of classism arising within the faith. By illustrating that Abraham was justified and made righteous before his circumcision, he seeks to dismantle the Jewish sense elitism by way of observance of the Law in addition to faith in Jesus, and the various ways this was held over Gentile believers (see also Rom 2:25-29; Gal 5:1-15).

GRACE SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

Faith alone is counted as righteousness

You and I find ourselves in the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ alone. That is, by belief and trust in his sinless life, unjustified sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection conquering sin and death. He was everything you and I were always meant to be, but could never achieve. He alone is entitled to look upon humanity—upon each and every one of us—with judgment and scorn. Instead, he freely gives all that he alone has earned. He welcomes us, as sinful and broken as we are, into *his* family, and to *his* table. And, in all this, we have so much greater a revelation of God than heroes of faith like Abraham ever did—and yet, he too believed. By God’s grace, we belong to the household of faith, and therefore, our faith is counted to us as righteousness.

CHANGE APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- Have you found yourself reducing the practice of your faith to simply moral living? How can this change?
- What might you say to someone struggling with feeling either a sense of elitism or a sense of fear in their faith? Which of these tends to come out more in you?
- How can your church community be supportive as we all strive to quiet the temptation toward earning justification?

PRAYER RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray for God’s grace to completely outshine the tendency to earn his favor in each of our lives and hearts.
- Pray that God will give you opportunities to love others well who also struggle with attempting to earn God’s favor.

Discipleship Check-In

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?