

Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

The Gospel According to Abraham...

Romans 3:27-4:25

Now the last time we met, we rejoiced together in the fact that we had finally come to Romans 3:21 and Paul's explanation of the righteousness of God provided in the gospel. You'll remember, I hope, how wonderful and refreshing Paul's presentation of that righteousness seemed to be after wading through the muck and mire of the sinful, fallen condition of humankind. I likened coming to Romans 3:21-26 to smelling at last to the fragrant scent of the Tyler Rose Garden after having endured a drive alongside the Tyler Soap Factory. It's such a wonderful transition from foulness to fragrance, from decadence to deliverance, from judgment to justification that it almost makes a person spiritually giddy.

But I also expect from last time that you will remember just how pressed for time we were trying to work through the riches of five simple verses. Now because of that, I want to take a few minutes and go back and retrace Paul's argument so far and remind you of the three very special words he uses here in Romans 3:21-26.

Now, his argument in Romans has been simple enough so far. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul explained to the Romans that he was not ashamed to preach the gospel to them because in the gospel there is revelation of a righteousness from God which is by faith. Of course, Paul didn't really explain right away how that righteousness had come about or really even what it meant to obtain it by faith.

Instead, he turned to the revelation of God's wrath against sinful humanity. He did that, I think, because he wanted to be perfectly clear about just why it was that the Romans or anybody else for that matter needed a righteousness from God in the first place.

Of course, the picture he painted in Romans 1:18-3:20 was vile but it was crystal clear in its point that there really are no righteous people out there seeking after God or obeying God or pleasing God. I think you could say that Paul did a masterful job getting his point across that sinful humanity is both helpless and hopeless before the righteous indignation of almighty God. That's why I love this by John Owen:

There is very little hope of bringing men to value the righteousness of Christ, as imputed to them, as long as they are so unacquainted with their own inherent unrighteousness. Until men know themselves better, they will care very little to know Christ at all.¹

In fact, it is Paul's success in getting the point of our sinfulness across in Romans 1:18-3:20 that makes the phrase "**but God**" in Romans 3:21 seem so wonderful. You see Paul's point there is that God has provided a righteousness suitable to stand before Him and that righteousness is imputed or credited to sinful men and women, not on account of any righteous works they might have done but rather on account of God's kindness in applying the righteousness of Christ to sinners linked to Him through faith. Now that's not just good news, you know. **That is the best news that ever was.**

Now as we were working through those five verses contained in Romans 3:21-26, we came face to face with three wonderful words and I spent some time last week trying to flesh out what those words meant because they are crucial to a

proper understanding of what God has done and how God could do what He has done without sacrificing His own integrity. The three words I am talking about are **“justification,” “redemption,”** and **“propitiation.”**

Now last week I defined **“justification”** using the Shorter Catechism this way:

Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.²

You can see **“justification”** is God’s act in our salvation; it is what God does as a result of Christ’s atoning work. Of course, it was always God purpose to justify sinners in this way.

Now you can’t really even begin to discuss **“justification”** without introducing another term, the term **“impute.”** Now the term **“impute”** is a word taken from the word of accounting and banking. Originally, it meant to put on account or to credit some amount of money to an existing account.³ Eventually, it lost its strictly financial and came to mean something like **“count,” “regard”** or **“consider”** sort of like when we say, **“I value more her more gold.”**

Anyway, inherent in the word **“justification”** is this notion of **“imputation.”** It means that God declares, regards or considers believing sinners to be **“righteous”** as an issue of their legal status in Christ. They are not **“justified”** because of anything they have done but rather as a result of what Christ has done. The Reformers spoke of imputation as having a double aspect. That is, they spoke of our sins being imputed to Christ and His righteousness being imputed to us. It is a great legal transaction involving our status before God. Understanding that helps us to make sense of passages like:

^{NIV} **1 Peter 2:24**...He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

You see Christ never actually became sinful. His holy nature would not have allowed that. But He was reckoned by God to be our substitute in order to bear the penalty of sin that was what imputed to Him. He was not made sinful. That would have not been possible but He was regarded as if He were sinful.⁴ That is what Paul means in 2 Corinthians 5 when he writes:

^{NIV} **2 Corinthians 5:21**...God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

John Owen notes that God did not make Christ a sinner but made Him to be sin that we might not merely be made righteous but righteousness.⁵ What that means is that He made Christ the recipient of the judgment we deserved. And that seems to be perfectly consistent with such passages as Isaiah 53:12 were this same word for “reckon” or “count” is used in the Septuagint.

^{NIV} **Isaiah 53:12**...Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered (ἐλογίσθη) with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

That is why Calvin can say:

How are we righteous in the sight of God? It is assuredly in the same respect in which Christ was a sinner. For he assumed in a manner our place, that he might be a criminal in our room, and might be dealt with as a sinner, not for his own offenses, but for those of others, inasmuch as he was pure and exempt from every fault, and might endure the punishment that was due to us — not to himself. It is in the same manner, assuredly, that we are now *righteous in him* — not in respect of our rendering satisfaction to the justice of God by our own works, but because we are

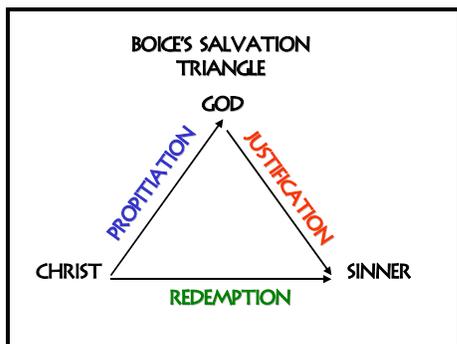
judged of in connection with Christ's righteousness, which we have put on by faith, that it might become ours.⁶

That is the very point made in both Philipians 3:9.

^{NIV} **Philippians 3:9**...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Of course, after I raised the issue of "**justification**" we talked about two other terms "**redemption**" and "**propitiation**." Those two terms describe what Christ Himself accomplished in the atonement. **Justification is God's act. Redemption and propitiation are Christ's acts.** On the one hand "**redemption**" was pointed toward the sinner. "**Redemption**" obtained the sinner's purchase out of the bondage and slavery of sin. On the other hand, "**propitiation**" was pointed toward God and Christ's act of "**propitiation**" placated or turned aside holy indignation and wrath. Christ redeemed man and propitiated God and because of that God justified believing sinners.

I particularly like James Montgomery Boice's visual representation, which he calls a "**Salvation Triangle**". In it, he represents what occurs in the wonderful act of salvation showing how Christ's work bears upon God and man and how God's work bears upon man as a result of what Christ has done.



Of course, that leads us to where we left off in the text last time and really is a natural starting point where we are putting into the text this morning at Romans 3:27. You can see, I think that Paul's question here gets right to the point at hand.

^{NIV} **Romans 3:27**...Where, then, is boasting?

You see Paul's question is, **"If all that is true, what basis does anyone have for boasting before God?"** The answer, of course, is there is no basis for boasting before God. Because Christ has redeemed us and propitiated the Father and because the Father has justified us apart from the works of the law, there is no basis whatsoever for boasting at all. That is, of course, exactly what Paul says next.

^{NIV} **Romans 3:27**... Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Now the verse, verse 29, is an expansion of Paul's argument and it is going to go something like this, **"Since there is only one God, there is only one means of salvation. It is not something different for the Jews and then something different for the Gentiles. No, all people are justified through faith apart from works."** Now look at verse 29 and let's see if that is what he says.

^{NIV} **Romans 3:29**...Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Now, that leads me to ask you a question. You see the text explicitly says that God is the God of the Jew and the Gentile and that He is their God not through works but through faith. Implicitly, of course, what Paul is saying is that God is

the God of the Hispanic and the Asian, the African and the European. He is the God of the Russian, the Portuguese and the American. He is the God of men and women, boys and girls, rich and poor, young and old, happy and sad, educated and ignorant and He is the God of all those groups through faith in Christ's justifying work and not through any other means. But here is my question, **"Is He your God? Have you really and truly come to trust in Him? Is your confidence for forgiveness and heaven based upon who you are or what you have done or is it based upon genuine faith in Christ's work for you?"**

Now I ask that brothers and sisters, boys and girls because I am compelled to ask it. I am not asking because I have doubts about anyone of you in particular. Rather, I ask it simply because only you know your heart and someday the Lord Jesus will ask me if I was faithful to discharge my duty and to placard before you Christ the Savior of sinners. So let me just say this, **"If the Spirit of God has not spoken peace to your heart with regard to these things please don't let the day pass and don't let the dullness that comes from a full stomach and a hot afternoon diminish your resolve to set these things straight. Flee to Christ today."**

Now in verse 31, Paul asks a wonderful question. Look at it.

^{NIV} **Romans 3:31**...Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Do you get his question? He's playing like someone is asking, **"If justification and redemption come through faith doesn't that mean we have pretty much scrapped the law? Doesn't that mean that the law of God has been somehow subverted and removed from its proper place and regard?"** Of course, Paul's

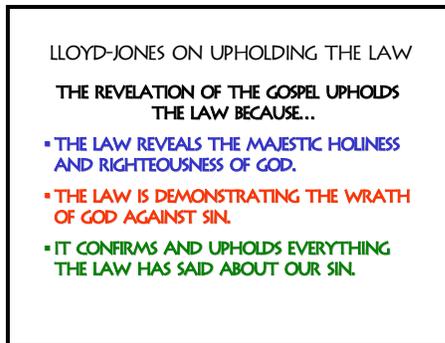
answer is, **“Not at all. In fact, just the opposite has happened. We haven’t nullified the law at all. We have upheld the law or established the law.”**

Now it seems to me that the commentators put forward at least three different interpretations of what Paul might have meant by this phrase **“upholding the law.”** He may have meant that the gospel message is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and if he meant that he is equating **“law”** to the Old Testament Scripture. What he would have meant is that this doctrine of justification by faith is the fulfillment of all that the Scripture has been pointing to. Of course, that would be true and he does go on immediately in the following verse to talk about two Old Testament figures. Still, I don’t think idea is in keeping with the immediately preceding context.⁷

Some commentators, and I mean very good commentators, seem to want to make this idea of upholding the law to refer to the righteous manner in which Christians are motivated to keep and obey the law after having been justified.⁸ But I don’t think Paul’s purpose here. That would make his focus sanctification and clearly his point here is to discuss the glory of justification.

I think Paul’s point is different than that. I think Martyn Lloyd Jones has it right when he says that at the law is upheld in at least three ways in the biblical doctrine of justification.⁹

- 1) The revelation of the gospel upholds the law because the law reveals the majestic holiness and righteousness of God.
- 2) Secondly, it reveals and upholds the law is demonstrating the wrath of God against sin.
- 3) Thirdly, this way salvation confirms and upholds everything the law has said about our sin.



Now, I mentioned last week that many godly preachers and theologians have been bold enough to assert that this section Romans 3:21-31 is actually the very heart of the Bible. That is the view of Martin Luther¹⁰, Donald Gray Barnhouse¹¹, Leon Morris and others¹². I, for one, think they are exactly right. Of course, that leads us inevitably to wonder and to ask the question, **“If chapter three is so important in its description of the righteousness of God provided in the gospel, then what is the connection between it and chapter four that follows?”** I think the best way to answer to that question is to say that chapter four is a really a very lengthy illustration drawn from Scripture to strengthen Paul’s claim that the righteousness that comes from God is on the basis of faith and not on the basis of works related to the law.

Now I want you to imagine for a minute that you were writing an important paper on the creation and intent of the framers of the American Constitution and let’s say for argument sake that you wanted to vindicate some particular argument or thesis about what their intentions or design. To whom would you turn? Whose opinions, speeches and correspondence would you use in your paper to make your point? I mean would it be appropriate to cite Yogi Berra for instance? How about Brittany Spears? How about Mike Tyson? Of course you may be thinking, **“Wouldn’t you want to cite someone that actually knew something about the Constitution? Wouldn’t you want to cite Jefferson, or**

Adams or Franklin or somebody that was actually there, instead?" And, if you were thinking something like that then you are thinking just like Paul was in chapter four. You see Paul has already made the point repeatedly that Jews and Gentiles are both justified by God through faith on account of Christ. Now the question is, **"What one person could he use, could he cite, that would be mutually convincing to both Jew and Gentile alike?"** I mean wouldn't it be perfect if Paul could find some character to vindicate his thesis concerning the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith alone who happened to have been both a Gentile and a Jew? Guess what? He did.

Listen to what F.F. Bruce says:

Paul has already said that this righteousness of God apart from law' is attested by the Law and the Prophets—i.e. by the Old Testament. This must now be shown, and Paul undertakes to show it principally from the story of Abraham, with a side-glance at the experience of David.¹³

Now, I cannot overestimate the status that the first century Jews gave to Abraham. Douglas Moo quotes the Book of Jubilees concerning Abraham where it says, **"Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness at the days of his life."**¹⁴ And I found a whole host of quotes from other first and second century sources relating how the Jews thought of Abraham. Here are just three.

SIRACH 44:19...ABRAHAM WAS THE GREAT FATHER OF A MULTITUDE OF NATIONS, AND NO ONE HAS BEEN FOUND LIKE HIM IN GLORY. ²⁰ HE KEPT THE LAW OF THE MOST HIGH, AND ENTERED INTO A COVENANT WITH HIM; HE CERTIFIED THE COVENANT IN HIS FLESH, AND WHEN HE WAS TESTED HE PROVED FAITHFUL.

PRAYER OF MANASSEH 18...THEREFORE YOU, O LORD, GOD OF THE RIGHTEOUS, HAVE NOT APPOINTED REPENTANCE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, FOR ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB, WHO DID NOT SIN AGAINST YOU, BUT YOU HAVE APPOINTED REPENTANCE FOR ME, WHO AM A SINNER.

1 MACCABEES 2:52...WAS NOT ABRAHAM FOUND FAITHFUL WHEN TESTED, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Sirach 44:19...Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory. ²⁰ He kept the law of the Most High, and entered into a covenant with him; he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved faithful.

^{NRS} **Prayer of Manasseh 1:8**...Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous, have not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you, but you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.

1 Maccabees 2:52...Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?

The point of all those quotes is that the first century Jew viewed Abraham as a man who stood before God, obedient to the Torah and righteous not by faith but by obedience to the law. That is why Paul's use of Abraham as an Old Testament illustration of a man justified by faith is so striking. Now, let's look at chapter 4:1.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:1**...What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**"

Do you get Paul's question? It really is a wonderful question. What he is asking is this, "**Now what has our forefather according to the flesh, Abraham, found out with regard to this issue of righteousness by faith?**" Now notice how Paul reintroduces the idea of boasting and then quickly applies it to Abraham. I think Paul's conclusion is that Abraham may have a lot to boast about but not when it comes to his standing before God. I love what Calvin has to say here explaining Paul's argument:

“If Abraham was justified by works, he might justly glory: but *since* he had nothing for which he could glory before God; then he was not justified by works.”¹⁵

Paul’s Old Testament quote is, of course, Genesis 15:6. It is a wonderful passage both because it is the first passage in the Bible to use the word “**believe**” and because it fits so perfectly into Paul’s argument.¹⁶

^{NIV} **Genesis 15:6**...Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Now, after declaring the fact that Abraham had no more to boast about before the Lord than anybody else, Paul offers something of a proverbial explanation of why that is so. Look at 4:4.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:4**...Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

You see what Paul is saying here is that this gift of a righteous standing is not given on the basis of anything good we have done. In fact, he says the exact opposite. Look at verse 5. What is the spiritual state of the man who trusts God and yet is justified before the Lord? There is one little word about half way through verse five that explains what kind of people are justified by believing, by faith. What is that word? It is the word “**wicked.**” **You see Paul’s point in these first five verses is that the first thing Abraham found out about the justification that comes from God is that it is not given on the basis of works.** If it were, it would be wages. But justification is not granted on the basis of wages due. It is based upon the kindness of God in applying the work of Christ to our sinful condition. Now just in case the reader might think that Abraham

has somehow gotten this particular fact wrong, Paul calls in a corroborating witness. He calls in the greatest King the Jews ever knew, the shepherd king, David. Look at verse 6.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:6...** David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ **"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."**

You see David's corroborating testimony is something like this, **"What Abraham has discovered is right. Righteousness before God does not come upon the basis of obedience to the law.¹⁷ Men are blessed when their sin is not counted against them, when they are viewed as righteous with the righteousness that the Lord gives through faith."**

Now one of the reasons Paul refers to the quote from Psalm 32 is because it uses the exact word in Septuagint that Paul has been using so far in Romans 4. It is the word **"reckon"** or **"count."** That was a common practice for first century teachers to connect different passages based upon the use of a similar word or sometimes even the same word whether or not the context fit. Of course, Paul does that and does it where the context matches perfectly. In other words, Paul exegetes the Old Testament passage properly and lets it have its full meaning and employs it in his argument correctly by using it just the way David did originally.¹⁸

Now down in verse 9-12, we find the second thing Abraham has discovered regarding this righteous standing before God in the basis of faith.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:9**...Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

If I were to ask you the most repeated word in the section I just read what would that word be? It would be **“circumcised”** and that word is at the center of Abraham’s second discovery concerning the righteousness of God that comes through justification by faith. Remember Abraham’s first discovery, his first word of testimony was that justification did not come on the basis of works. **His second discovery is that this right standing before God did not come upon the basis of circumcision.** Now do you see his reasoning for arguing that it did not come on the basis of **“circumcision?”** Paul argues that this righteousness that comes by faith did not through circumcision because he was declared righteous before he was circumcised, not after. In fact, the Jews themselves argued that Abraham’s circumcision did not come until twenty-nine years after he received the promise.¹⁹ Abraham enjoyed the benefit of **“believer’s circumcision”** and that circumcision was a sign of the righteousness standing he already possessed before God on the basis of faith.

Obviously, Paul’s point is that Abraham is the spiritual father of all those who believe. He is the spiritual father of those who believe apart from circumcision and he is the father of those believe who also happen to be circumcised. You what Paul is going to do here is finish the though he started way backing chapter

2:29. He is going to argue that the spiritual Jew is the man who possesses the righteousness of God that comes through faith and not through heredity alone.

^{NIV} **Romans 2:29**...No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

The way he makes that argument here and you will see this especially at the end of the chapter is by asserting that the fatherhood of Abraham is primarily spiritual and only secondarily physical.

Now look at verses 13-15.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:13**...It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Now so far Abraham has discovered that the righteousness of God is not by works and not by circumcision. **Obviously, then here his third discovery is that the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith is not by law.** Now some commentators think that Paul is making here the same argument he makes in Galatians, that is that the law came a long time after Abraham and thus Abraham could not possibly have been justified by the law.²⁰ But there is no hint of that here. In fact, the text seems clear that the reason Abraham was not justified by the law is because the law consumes everyone it comes in touch with. It is the notion, I think of *lex semper accusat*, "the law always accuses." The law not only cannot justify; it actually makes sin more heinous. Listen to what Calvin says:

...that he who is not instructed by the written law, when he sins, is not guilty of so great a transgression, as he is who knowingly breaks and transgresses the law of God.²¹

You see Paul's argument in this section is that the law not only does not make a person righteous before God, it takes the law, which is a good thing reflecting the character of a holy and righteous God and subverts it, turning it into an instrument of death and judgment. Listen to Donald Gray Barnhouse.

The law is the womb of doubt and anyone who is attached to the law or its *works* is going to be besieged by all of the doubts, which are born from the law. Any individual who has his eyes upon himself will be miserable. The man who walks by the law walks in the night, and his footsteps echo against the wall of the darkness that goes with the law. These echoes rise to his ears, and each sound from all the troop of doubts gives him fear upon fear. If he pauses, he is in the silence of dread fears, and as he runs from them his footsteps echo all the faster with the increasing tempo of his hysteria of doubt...²²

Well, so far we have seen that Abraham discovered that the righteousness of God was not by works, not by circumcision, and not by law. The real question then is this, **"Did he ever learn where it came from?"** The answer to that question comes in verse 16.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:16...** Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: **"I have made you a father of many nations."** He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. ¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, **"So shall your offspring be."** ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old-- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver

through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why **"it was credited to him as righteousness."**

You see Paul finally gets to his point here in the life of Abraham. Abraham believed God and as a result the righteousness that Abraham possessed was a **"credited righteousness"**, a **"reckoned righteousness."** What Abraham discovered was a **"righteousness"** reckoned to him on account of what Christ has done. That is why Paul has repeated himself an extraordinary eleven times in this chapter.

^{NAS} **Romans 4:3...**"And Abraham believed God, and it **was reckoned** to him as righteousness."

^{NAS} **Romans 4:4...**Now to the one who works, his wage **is not reckoned** as a favor, but as what is due.

^{NAS} **Romans 4:5...**But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is reckoned as righteousness,**

^{NAS} **Romans 4:6...**just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to **whom God reckons righteousness** apart from works:

^{NAS} **Romans 4:8...**"Blessed is the man whose sin the **Lord does not reckon** against him."

^{NAS} **Romans 4:10...****How then was it reckoned?** While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

^{NAS} **Romans 4:11...**and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised...**that righteousness might be reckoned to them,**

^{NAS} **Romans 4:22...****Therefore also it was reckoned** to him as righteousness.

And he finishes the chapter of with two more **"reckons"** and a direct application to us who follow hard after the faith of Abraham.

^{NIV} **Romans 4:23...** The words **"it was reckoned to him"** were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, **to whom God will reckon righteousness--** for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He

was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

You see Paul's point is that this notion of Abraham's faith being reckoned as righteousness was not written for the benefit of Abraham. It was written for my sake and for your sake. Now I want you to think about that. Paul is saying that this verse was actually written for the benefit of building up your faith, of making you confident that Jesus died for your benefit by bearing the penalty of your sins and that He was raised from the dead in order that God might speak peace to your heart by assuring you that Christ's work was accepted on behalf of all believing sinners. That means that the next time someone says to you, **"Christian do you have any hope? Do you have any confidence that your sins are forgiven?"** You can smile and say and with full assurance, **"I reckon I do."**

Let's pray.

¹ John Owen, "The Doctrine of Justification By Faith" from *The Works of John Owen Vol. 5* edited by William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965; reprint 1981), 21. Slightly modernized by myself for the benefit of modern listeners.

² Westminster Assembly, *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Suwanee, Georgia: Great Commission Press, 1647; reprinted 1998), 11. Question 33. Slightly modernized.

³ Robert K. Johnston, "Imputation" from *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* edited by Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 554-5

⁴ Johannes Eichler, "Think" in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 3* edited by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971; reprinted in English 1978), 825. Cf. Henry George Liddell, and Robert. Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon Revd. By Sir Henry Stuart Jones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p.1055d.

⁵ Owen, 37. Owen quotes Chrysostom. "For he does not say, he made him a sinner, but sin; that we might be made, not merely righteous, but righteousness, and that the righteousness of God, when we are justified not by works, but by grace, whereby all sin is blotted out." See John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians" trans. by Talbot W. Chambers from the *Nicene*

and *Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. 12* edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1889; reprint 1994), 334. "For he said not "made" [Him] a sinner, but "sin;" not, 'Him that had not sinned' only, but "that had not even known sin; that we" also "might become," he did not say 'righteous,' but, "righteousness," and, "the righteousness of God."

⁶ John Calvin, "Commentary on 2 Corinthians" trans. by John Pringle taken *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XX* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 242.

⁷ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 253-4. Though not the position he holds, Moo says that this is the most popular interpretation of 3:31. This is the position of Dodd, naturally. Cf. C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the Moffatt NT Commentary Series (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932; reprinted 1947), 63-4. "But the word 'Law' —or rather the Hebrew Torah which it represents —as we have already seen had a double meaning: it meant the code of commands but it meant also the total revelation of God in the Old Testament. This wider meaning would always be in the background of Paul's thought; and he could not admit that, in this sense, faith cancelled the Law For the Old Testament revelation held within it the principles of a religion of faith, over and above the code of commands, so that the righteousness of God by faith' is attested by the Law and the prophets, and, in this sense, Paul could say, We uphold the Law."

⁸ Moo, 255. This is Moo's position, also Stott's. Cf. John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 121.

⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 3:20-4:25, Atonement and Justification* Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971; reprint 2003), 146-7. Of course, Lloyd Jones lists more than three reasons but these are the principal three.

¹⁰ Moo, 218.

¹¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 2: God's Remedy 3:21-4:125 and God's River 5:1-11* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954 and 1959; reprint 1994), 1.

¹² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988; reprint, 1994), 173.

¹³ F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1977; reprint 1994), 110.

¹⁴ Moo, 256.

¹⁵ Calvin, 154. Also quoted by Hodge. Cf. Charles Hodge, *Romans* from the Crossway Classic Series edited by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1993), 101.

¹⁶ Moo, 264.

¹⁷ Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Lectures on Systematic Theology*, edited by J.H. Fairchild (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 396. "If I understand the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith, they regarded justification as a state resulting from the relation of an adopted child of God, which state is entered into by faith alone, and held that justification is not conditioned upon obedience for the time being, but that a person in this state may, as they hold that all in this life in fact do, sin daily and even continually, (*simul justus peccator*) yet without condemnation by the law, their sin bringing them only under his fatherly displeasure, and subjecting them to the necessity of repentance...not as a condition of pardon or of ultimate salvation. They seem to have regarded the child of God as no longer under moral government, in such a sense that sin was imputed to him, this having been imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness so literally imputed to him that, do what he may, after the first act of faith he is accounted and treated in his person as wholly righteous. If this is not antinomianism, I do not know what is..."

¹⁸ Moo, 266.

¹⁹ C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 1, Introduction and Commentary on Romans 1-8* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1992), 235.

²⁰ Moo, 273.

²¹ Calvin, 172.

²² Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 2: God's Remedy 3:21-4:125 and God's River 5:1-11* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954 and 1959; reprint 1994), 296-7.