

The Text

Romans 3:27–4:5 (CSB) Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

The Support

You cannot earn a gift. It is no longer a gift but payment owed.

We don't get to take credit for anything that God gives

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith.

Isaiah 42:8 (CSB)
I am the LORD. That is my name,
and I will not give my glory to another
or my praise to idols.

In other words, if we could work for our salvation, then how is it a gift? Are we not workers getting their wages due?

There are no works needed in order to be saved by God

²⁸ For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Now let us get into the weeds. Let us get into the mucky muck. What do I mean? Let us bring up a contradiction in the Bible. At first glance, it would appear that the half-brother of Jesus would say otherwise:

James 2:14-21 (CSB) What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?

If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works. You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder.

Senseless person! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless? Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar?

Paul says we are saved apart from works and uses Abraham as example. James says faith without works is useless and uses Abraham as example. Here is the rub: they are both right.

Apart from believing, trusting, and obeying God, all of our works are trash in the sight of God:

Isaiah 64:6 (CSB) All of us have become like something unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment;
all of us wither like a leaf,
and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

James is just expounding on the words of Christ while Jesus was here on earth:

Luke 6:43-45 (CSB) "A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit; on the other hand, a bad tree doesn't produce good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs aren't gathered from thornbushes, or grapes picked from a bramble bush. A good person produces good out of the good stored up in his heart. An evil person produces evil out of the evil stored up in his heart, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

And guess what. Paul and James are not at odds with one another. Paul would adamantly agree with James:

Ephesians 2:10 (CSB) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

In other words, we cannot do good works--works that are given to us by God, ordained by His grace, to his will and good pleasure--unless we belong to him.

I have used this example before: take an unbeliever and the believer side by side.

Both give stupid amounts of money to the church.

Both serve on Sundays.

Both went to seminary.

Both don't cuss. Both don't drink.

Yet, to the one who does not trust, does not believe, and does not worship Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, that person is under the wrath of God. To the one who believes in his name, God gave him the right to become His protected and blessed adopted child forever.

And you think that my example is extreme, Christ goes even further:

Luke 18:9-14 (CSB) He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'

"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!' I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

In other words, both of them have sinned and fallen way short of the glory of God. Yet, by grace of God alone, only one saw it with his opened eyes.

One man is doing all he can to get in right with God and hoping for the best. The other is putting himself into the mercies and grace of God and crying out to God, "Save me!"

It is a posture of the heart. And the heart is wicked and desperately sick. Do you think you are doing a good enough job? You are not. Run to God and fall into his loving, saving arms so that you can be with him forever and ever.

Christ only came to heal the sick and save sinners.

Where do you see God in the text? What does the text say about God?

God

God alone justifies us and it has nothing to do with who we are and what have done or not done

²⁹⁻³⁰ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Romans 8:30 (CSB) And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

God will not give his glory to another. That is why you are not getting any credit for your salvation because salvation is of God alone for he is the mighty one who saves. You don't get credit for your goodness. God alone is good.

And you think, "Why is God such a glory hog?" We can debate all day long that if God was not about his glory, he would cease to be God. That argument is for another day. But have you ever thought that God is about his glory in your salvation because there was nothing in you to save yourself?

What if Satan the Accuser called you out in the presence of God? Here is the drop kick to the pants: Satan wouldn't have to lie to rightly accuse you of some of your sin. God would know your sin just as well.

But continue on Romans 8:

Romans 8:31-34 (CSB) What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.

God did not spare his own Son.

God gave up Jesus for us all.

God grants us everything.

No one can accuse us of any wrongdoing.

God alone is the justifier.

No one can condemn us for anything.

Jesus Christ is the one who died. More so than that, who is raised, who ascended to the right hand of the Father, who is interceding for us

This does not mean we get to skip the law of God altogether

³¹ Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Someone once told me that we don't have to obey the laws of God necessary because Jesus fulfilled it. Jesus did fulfill it but look at what he said about fulfilling his own law:

Matthew 5:17-20 (CSB) "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

We are to obey God because as believers, we now *get* to obey God.

But it also means that God does not owe us one thing for anything good we might do

Romans 4:1-5 (CSB) What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness. Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

God is our righteousness.

God will not be placed into our debt. I don't know of a fancy theological term for that.

I just know that so many people try to score a deal with God: "God, if I do this thing for you, then you should do this thing for me." I have heard it gone as far as, "Do this thing for me and I will do this thing for you."

Now, for those of us who have read the Bible, we might suggest, "Didn't Gideon do this exact thing?" (Judges 6)

Here's the thing: Gideon believed and it was counted to him as righteousness. In other words, because God preached the good news to Gideon, Gideon believed and was in right standing with God

Many of you are trying to bargain with the Almighty God of the Universe and yet you do not believe. God does not deal with the wicked. He does not make bets with worthless people. They have no power. He has all the power. Why should he negotiate with an unbeliever when the sons of Adam have nothing to give. And everything that mankind has ever received comes from the provision of God alone.

And still many of you believe at a young age thinking if you did all the right things, that God would bless you. Most of you all are now just figuring that out that it doesn't work. It doesn't work because when we try to earn credit with God, it is nullify and void.

God is not a little god to be bargain with.

The Gospel

Maybe you are guilty of this. I grew up this way. Thinking if I believe hard enough, trusted hard enough, pray hard enough, and didn't have sex before marriage, that God was going to give me the good life. Never mind the fact I didn't trust God, didn't obey him, lied all the time, was violent and had a crippling porn addiction years before the Internet became a household utility.

And I had to repent of this thinking because it is wicked idolatry, witchcraft, and self-righteousness.

If this is you, and don't be so quick to think it is not, do you know when a good time would be to repent of this sin??

The best time would have been years ago.

The second best time would be right this second. Listen, you might try to hold on and think you can still get God to give you favor if you can do more and more stuff. That is the opposite of repentance. And the Bible makes it clear that repentance doesn't come from within us (because nothing is good within us) but yet, it is a gift from God.

Acts 11:18 (CSB) When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, "So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles."

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (CSB) The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Romans 2:4 (CSB) Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

Our Responsibility

Mark 1:14-15 (CSB) After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Most religions suggest that you repent. God commands that in order for you to trust and believe in Him, you must repent.

What is repentance? Changing the way you live that bears witness that you worship the Living God.

Let me ask you this: are you busy repenting of sin when you see your sin clearly exposed by the word of God? Then praise Him and give thanks to him for this wonderful gift. Or when the word of God before you exposes your sin, are you too busy trying to do Biblical gymnastics so that your sin is not a sin?

Or like most of us: just don't read the Bible, ignore the word of God and that solves that problem.

If you are in sin and refusing to repent of it, and we all know that God gives the gift of repentance to all those who trust and obey him, why hasn't He given you this gift? Do you even dare to ask for this gift of repentance so that you can repent and change your life and believe in God and live in God?

Do you dare?

Repent for the kingdom of God is here.

Pray

THE ONLY GOD

Give me the gift of repentance so I can turn away from sin and turn back to you.

Amen.

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