

## The Text

Romans 4:6–12 (CSB) Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven  
and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the person  
the Lord will never charge with sin.

Is this blessing only for the circumcised, then? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say, Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness. In what way, then, was it credited—while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also. And he became the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while he was still uncircumcised.

# The Support

Old Testament saints were justified by God because they believed--not because they fulfilled a checklist of duties

Romans 4:6–8 (CSB) Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven  
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the Lord will never charge with sin.

We might engage the Old Testament and be tempted as the Israelites were, "All I have to do is go through the motions and God will do my bidding or provide or keep us safe from our enemies or whatever I need him to do in order to make my life happy." And I don't think anybody would dare say that with their mouths. But some of us live our lives in this way: "I am a Christian, my life should be way better than this"

Nowhere in the Bible did God promise a easy life. He did promise suffering--mostly because you are called to be holy in a fallen world.

Because of that holiness, life is not going to go your way.

Then there is the temptation: "Why should I even believe? Why even be a Christian?"

Here's the promise for those who play the part but choose not to obey:

Jeremiah 9:25–26 (CSB) “Look, the days are coming—this is the LORD’s declaration—when I will punish all the circumcised yet uncircumcised: Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the inhabitants of the desert who clip the hair on their temples. All these nations are uncircumcised, and the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.’ ”

I know you have this before. Let me put it in another way:

John 3:36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

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

## God

God is not some idol that will save us if we can do the right things

First, idols don't save. They don't provide. They will not make you happy.

Sin doesn't save. It doesn't provide. Sin might make you happy for a moment or two--but it only leads to death and the wrath of God.

Throughout all time, God has consistently never been satisfied with our bare minimum--just check the boxes, get from God what I want, and then he needs to leave me alone so I can go and do my own thing.

As sinful, wicked, wholly imperfect, messed up people in the Bible as they were, they are still counted among the saved because they believe.

When they believed, we know they believed because their lives look dramatically different before and after. In Abraham's case, he was going one direction--content, staying at home, and just being a rich man. Instead, he met God and had to leave the only home and family that he ever knew.

Abraham believed and it was counted to him as righteousness. But you say to yourself, "Oh, Abraham must have done the right things and then God said he was righteous." Paul is here to remind us of this history lesson:

Romans 4:9-10 (CSB) Is this blessing only for the circumcised, then? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say, Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness. In what way, then, was it credited—while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised.

Now Abraham believed in God before he could do one singular thing in obeying God.

And if you think that this is the first time we have seen this prior to Abraham, that would not be the case. Go backwards...

Noah:

Genesis 6:7-9 (CSB) Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them." Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God.

And further back all the way to Eden, with Adam and Eve. God preaches the gospel:

Genesis 3:15 (CSB) I will put hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

... then Adam and Eve believe:

Genesis 3:21 (CSB) The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

God gives the sacrifice and clothes them in his righteousness alone.

God alone gives grace. Then Adam, Eve, Noah, and all believers were obedient but not until He gave grace first for them to believe.

If you walk away from this study not knowing anything about the God of the Bible, then know and see that God is consistent. In other words, God is perfect.

God called Abraham in Genesis 12. Abraham believed. Then God gives the commandment for circumcision in Genesis 17:

Genesis 17:11 (CSB) You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you.

Was God calling Abraham to hack off some foreskin just so Abraham can check the off a list so that Abraham can go about his merry way? No! Believing in God means obeying God. If you don't obey God, then you don't believe.

And ultimately, it comes down to the matter of the heart. Your heart. My heart. The hearts of all of mankind. You might try to ignore it. You might try to do a few good things. But, to some of us whom the Holy Spirit is engage and revealing, you are going to see your heart for what it really is: not obeying, not worshipping God and far from God and wanting nothing from God.

God was never asking for actions. God was asking for our hearts and our lives--every square inch because it all belongs to him.

God has always been like this. God did ask Abraham to circumcise but that was a reflection of what he will do in the hearts of his people:

Jeremiah 4:4 (CSB)  
Circumcise yourselves to the LORD;

remove the foreskin of your hearts,  
men of Judah and residents of Jerusalem.  
Otherwise, my wrath will break out like fire  
and burn with no one to extinguish it  
because of your evil deeds.

Look at the words of Christ as he quotes the prophet Hosea:

Matthew 9:13 (CSB) Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

# The Gospel

Once God has your heart, you are saved to God and not a moment before

Continue on.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while still uncircumcised. This was to make him the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, so that righteousness may be credited to them also.

When I think about the salvation of man and God's gospel commandment to repent and believe in his Son, I often think of the words of the professional bodybuilder, consecutive 8-time Mr. Olympia, Ronnie Coleman:

Everybody wants to be a bodybuilder, but nobody wants to lift no heavy-a\*\* weights.  
- Ronnie Coleman

Here's the truth: here in America, it is easy peasy to be a Christian. Now, not too long ago, it used to be advantageous and encouraged to be in church. Why? For some, that looked good to your neighbor and your friends at work. And what was the worst that you had to do? Show up on Sunday for an hour and half, sing some decent songs and hear a preacher that wasn't saying anything too hard.

Nowadays and in the days ahead, it has become less of a benefit to be a Christian. You don't gain favor with your neighbor or co-worker by going to your local church.

People in church often talk about there is a falling away from the church. But consider this:

What if people stopped going to church because there wasn't anything in it for them anymore? They didn't want to pretend. They didn't get anything out of it. They didn't see the commandments of God to be absolutely obeyed. They didn't see God to be feared, awed, worshiped, obeyed, believed, and loved. Why? Maybe their parents didn't believe. They went to church but what was in the Bible didn't match up with what was lived out at home or in town. Maybe the people around them didn't seem too concerned with God and their lives turned out okay. Maybe that all I wanted was to stop being single, get married and yet, no Christian guy or girl is asking me out. Is finding a God-fearing spouse really that important? Marriage has got to be better than being alone.

During the height of church attendance about twenty years ago, it was easy to look like a Christian because the requirements were easy. But when the preacher starts preaching the full council of God, or life's circumstances kick you in the gut, or the Holy Spirit keep pressing you on your ongoing unconfessed unrepentant sins, and suddenly, it ain't easy to be a Christian. Read the Bible and suddenly, you started to see what it really costs to be a disciple of Christ.

It costs you everything.

If costs you everything in your heart.

You are going to have to give up all of your sin.

And you have been here before. You have confessed, cried, promised, screamed, rationalized, and blamed others for your sin. But to be honest with yourself: you don't want to give up your sin. Don't you? Yet, that is the part of your heart that God wants.

Everybody wants to look like a Christian but nobody wants to give over their entire lives over to God. Everybody wants to be good but nobody wants to obey God and take him at his full word. Everybody wants to get to heaven but so very few of us really want God for all of eternity.

But, for those of us who are at the end of our lives--and what I mean by that is the end of trying, the end of striving, the end of pretending, the end of everything--and just cry out to God to take their heart and their lives right now, let us look at the work of God:

Deuteronomy 30:6 (CSB) The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love him with all your heart and all your soul so that you will live.

How? How does God circumcise your heart?

Ezekiel 36:25–27 (CSB) I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

Or to sum it up in another way:

Ephesians 2:8–10 (CSB) For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

# Our Responsibility

Obey the gospel command: repent and believe

Romans 4:12 And he became the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while he was still uncircumcised.

We tend to point to something in our past and say, "Look, look! I did this thing in church on this day. That means I am saved." Said a prayer. Got baptized. Filled with the Spirit. Speaking in tongues. Went to church. My parents are Christian. On staff. On the worship team. My pastor can vouch for me. Read the Bible. Prayed a few times. Gave faithfully.

I will never forget this teacher's response when one of his students came up and asked him, "Excuse me, sir, are you a Christian?"

To which the teacher responded with, "You tell me."

What would people who *actually* know you say about you? In other words, do you keep pointing to this event back in the past to convince yourself that you are saved? Or can you point to God's grace today that you are not like you were yesterday or the month before or the year before?

I spent most of my life calling myself a Christian. Then right around my late twenties and early thirties, God just kept sending man after godly men my way to point me back to Christ. Then at this one job, two gents who heard me confess with my mouth that I was a Christian but my life said otherwise. You know what they did? Began praying for my salvation and just kept sharing Christ with me. They didn't stop until God seized my heart.

Listen, this is what we know of God and his people:

- God disciplines his kids
- God conforms his kids to look his only begotten Son
- His steadfast love never ceases
- He gives grace upon grace
- His mercies are new every morning

You cannot save yourself. Only God saves.

In all of that, what is our responsibility? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ every time you get up in the morning all the way until you go back to sleep. Confess your sins quickly. Change the way you live for the rest of your life. Yes, we are not going to do it perfect. In fact, when we try to obey him perfectly we are actually sinning--not unless we have trusted Christ with our whole heart and all of our sin. Only right then can you obey him.



# Pray

MY ONLY SAVIOR KING

Give me a new heart, new mind, and new desires just for you.

Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my tongue to speak, and the life in my body to worship you.

Be my Savior.

Amen.

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