

March 28, 2021 - Tom Grass

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Preacher: Tom Grass

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Well, good morning. Let's just open in prayer. And if you want to turn your Bibles to Romans chapter four, and then we'll pray.

We'll kind of be going through the verses, pretty much staying right there in Romans chapter four. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you for this morning.

Thank you for a chance to remember what you did for us on Calvary. Completely you paid the price for our sins, for our righteousness. Guide us in this study this morning. May we be encouraged and strengthened through the words spoken.

In Jesus name, amen. I think I'm shrinking. I'm going to go down. Last week, Dave Vineyard did a great job with those passages.

And part of it was about boasting. And one of the verses that is Romans 3.27. Where is boasting then is excluded by what law of works?

[1 : 24] No, but by the law of faith. And then first Corinthians 1.31 says, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. And one of the things David said at the end was that we're all united together around Christ.

And that was a good reminder where that's where our unity is. And he challenged us to emulate or model our lives after the apostle Paul.

And then he told us that Paul was not afraid to hold a controversial message. And that was really challenging.

And I thought he really nailed it. You know, saying what the Bible says in a culture that would not agree with it. And boy, is that timely or what?

And he did a great job. I don't have any jokes for you. I don't have any puns. I'm sorry. I don't roll that way. But I do have a short video that might talk a little bit about boasting.

[2 : 23] And if you've seen it, just enjoy it. And then we'll get on with our message. Beginning of a spring training game and Yachty still behind the dish.

They walk Maldonado. So now there's a base runner at first and they bring in the young gun, Siri. I don't think he's played a day in the MLB. He gives his gold chain to the first base coach.

He's on first and he's going to try and steal against the catcher who set the record for opening day starts in a row last year and will break it himself this year. So Yachty says right away, you know what, pitch?

Let's check on this rookie. Make sure he doesn't get ahead of himself over there. Just because it's seventh inning of a spring training game doesn't mean I'm not coming for him. Look at that. Calls for the outside fastball.

Eyes him down. Says, yeah, all right, I'll come your way. Pitch is not where he wants it. Still goes for the pickoff. Almost gets him sliding back to first.

[3 : 20] Now Siri's shaking his head. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You don't do that to me. No, no, no, no, no, no. And Yachty goes, oh, okay. Steal then. Take off. Let's see what happens.

Next pitch, foul ball. So nothing going. Then high, dude didn't run. Now it's a 2-2 count. Yachty calls for the changeup. You know, pitchers still got to work on things. Off-speed pitch.

Boom. Nails him. And now Yachty's saying, you want to make that contact? You're going to look at me? You're going to look at me? No, no, no, no. Okay, fine. All right. Nice knowing you. See you later. Hey, Woody.

Nice pitch, by the way. Called the... You might see boasting in that video. I don't know. Maybe I'm both guys, you know. But it's really something anyway. So this morning, rate yourself in your walk with Christ.

Do a 1 to 10. 0 to 100%. You know, two-thirds, 66.7%. Where are you at today? Where are you at this morning? Where were you at Friday?

[4 : 20] Where were you at with your walk with the Lord in your worst moment this past week? I know where I was at in my worst moment. Where are you... What's your standing right now before the Lord in your walk with God? What is it?

Now, think of that number and go tell somebody you're most uncomfortable with in this room where you stand with the Lord. Go ahead. No, no, don't do that. I don't even know if that's funny.

But I want to explain a term before we start in the verses, imputation. I can guarantee you I won't completely describe the depths of this word to its best way that could be described.

I'll give it a shot, though. What happens when a sinner believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ? What happens when faith he believes and God credits its righteousness to a sinner?

So what happens at that moment? Imputation. There's a double transfer that occurs. The sin of the individual person is transferred to Jesus Christ.

[5 : 31] And at that very same time, the righteousness of Christ is transferred to the sinner. That's imputation. It's a double transfer.

This creates a problem. How can a sinner be righteous? So at that very moment that God declares you righteous, you are still a sinner.

Does that make sense? It's kind of a tricky thing to put your head around. I remain completely righteous from the moment I believe, even though I do and will continue to sin.

So what's your rating? What's that number that you came up with? 60 percent? 40 percent? 98 percent? What was that number you had? Nine out of ten?

Six out of ten? But really, you're completely righteous. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are 100 percent righteous right now. Right at your worst moment this past week, you are completely righteous before God.

[6 : 37] If, in fact, you have true saving faith, right? It's not enough to understand that Christ died for your sins.

I don't mean it that way. It's not enough for you to understand. There's more to it than that Jesus just came and died on the cross. He could have come at 30 years old, 33, 40 years old, because God could create, could appear in any form of age he wanted to, and gone right into Jerusalem and died on the cross and said, okay, I died for your sins.

But there's something else that happened, and that's the life of Christ. The life of Christ proved to mankind that he was completely righteous, that he lived a perfect life.

He never sinned. So we have this righteous life that was offered up for you and for me. In 2 Corinthians 5.21, it's written this way.

He made him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And if you want to go a little deeper than that, look up R.C. Sproul.

[7 : 46] He does this series. I listened to this one study, Justification by Faith, you know, and he's very good at explaining things like this, and it would be a good thing if you want to find that.

The reason I brought that up is because I just want you to think about that a little bit. What happened when you believed? If you're not a believer here today, you know, what God offers is eternal life, salvation, because Christ died on the cross for your sins.

And you put your faith in that, you can have eternal life. Like this morning in Sunday school, what must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved. You and your household, it says in Acts, when Paul is talking to Philippian jailers.

There's two verses that I find bookends about this justification in this section of Romans. In Romans 3.28, it says, Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, parts from deeds of the law.

And then Romans 4.16, which really sums up the whole passage. We could read this and say this study is over, you know, if you just read this verse and thought about it.

[8 : 53] Romans 4.16, Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are the law, but also to those who are the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

So, I'm going to read an excerpt from a commentary by Jameson Fawcett Brown.

It's a conglomeration of writers, but this is what he talks about. He says, Abraham's justification took place long before he was circumcised, and so could have no dependence upon that right.

No, the sign of circumcision was given to Abraham as a seal or token of the righteousness which he had before he was circumcised, in order that he may stand forth to every age as a parent believer, the model man of justification by faith, after whose types, as the first public example of it, all were to be molded, whether Jew or Gentile, who should thereafter believe to everlasting life?

They're just saying that Abraham is this example of faith, justification by faith. And if you think about Rome, Romans, you think, why would Paul spend so much time to a Roman church talking about Abraham?

[10:22] I thought that was kind of an interesting thought. It's like he goes to great lengths, and we find it later in this book, too, where he keeps talking about a lot of things that would be more common for the Jews to understand than the Romans, maybe.

But that's what Paul uses as an example in his teaching. What I'd like to do is just go through these verses and make some comments. I don't really have like three points.

You know, I don't have a handout. So it's just going to be a flow of reading the Scripture and understanding this. And starting in Romans chapter 4, verse 1 through 2, and I am backing up a little bit, because the whole section here kind of has this whole conversation or discussion that Paul does.

Romans 4, 1 to 2. Abraham can't justify about it because it wasn't by works.

But did Abraham have works? Sure. God called him. He left his family. He went across the Euphrates River. He waited for God to show him where to go.

[11:39] He was willing to offer his son, Isaac, his only son, and more. Abraham had a life of faith. But that's not what justified him. That's not what declared him righteous before God.

What did? Romans 4, 3. What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. So what is the basis for Abraham's righteousness?

Belief. Faith. If it's not by works or my efforts, if it is by works or my efforts, God would be a debtor to me. Right?

If I could earn my salvation, God would owe me something. But it's not. It's of grace. Romans 4, 4 to 5. It says, To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as a debt.

Right? When you work, you get a paycheck. Well, some people don't work and get paychecks.

That's another story. Anyway. But, you know, it's what you're owed.

[12:48] You put that time in. Verse 5. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

That's a really clear verse, isn't it? Do you have to work to be declared righteous?

No. Do you have to work to have Christ's imputed righteousness given to you? Can you earn it? Abraham couldn't. This is fantastic.

Not emotional kind of, I'm not a real loud emotional guy. This is fantastic. I can enter. It opens the door, and it keeps it open for me.

God blesses me on the basis of my faith, and not on my works or performance. Thank God. Right?

[13:54] I said this. It keeps it open for me. It keeps it open for you. Right now, last week, tomorrow. The moment you feel you don't measure up, at that moment, you still do have your standing before God guaranteed.

It's complete righteousness because of the finished work of Christ. So do you view your standing before God based on your merits?

Or based on your faith? Is it based on your performance? Do you find acceptance before God? Isn't this hard?

It's hard to take this thought in, isn't it really? Because in my world, like everything's never fixed. Like in my job, everything's broken. All day.

All day long at work, everything is still broken. You fix something, it's still broken because the next one's broken. Everything's broken. Never done. Never done. But the work of Christ is finished.

[15:06] It's the only thing in my life that's finished. It is. Nothing else is. My house isn't finished.

My yard's not finished. My work, jobs at work are not finished. God takes my faith and sees me as righteous, a righteous man. I'll accept that.

Yet I know myself and my feelings. It's so hard to accept this fact from God, isn't it? Does anybody else struggle with it?

Yeah. I don't measure up. Because the rest of my life doesn't measure up. But it's not based on me and the rest of my life.

It's based on what Christ did for me. Imputation. Look it up. Study it. It's really freeing. Right now, we'll look at a couple sections here, verses in Romans that come from, that comes from Psalm 32. [16:07] But this is Romans 4, 6 to 8. Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works. Blessed.

Blessed means, oh, how happy the man. Doesn't that sound better than, I mean, it sounds good either way, but oh, how happy the man whose lawless deeds are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Oh, how happy the man, the Lord will not impute sin. God does not keep track of all your little shortcomings. Yeah, we know about, you know, our rewards in the future, but it does not change your relationship with him.

He's not sitting there. He does not impute sin. He doesn't keep a list of what your shortcomings are. It's not based on your good works.

You're standing before Christ. It's based on Christ's finished work. Blessed. You could say, oh, fortunate one.

[17:04] Oh, fortunate one that God does not impute sin. How fortunate you are. These are my thoughts. I'm, I'm just saying what the Bible says.

I'm not making up a new philosophy. I'm not making up a new religion. I'm just reading the scripture, right? This is what God's teaching is. Tom Grass, righteous?

No, no, no. Jesus Christ, righteous? Yeah, he is. He has completely, fully, absolutely, 100% guaranteed, 110% given me Jesus Christ's righteousness.

Because I have faith in the finished work of Christ. You do too, if you have that faith. Who is this righteousness available to? Who is this blessedness?

Oh, fortunate one. Who's it available to? Romans 4, 9 through 10. Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?

[18:08] For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How was it accounted? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? While he was uncircumcised.

Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness before he was circumcised. The righteousness does not come from an act of the flesh. Sometimes people put a gospel message out there, and some of us call it Christ plus.

Some of us might refer to it. You need Christ, but you also have to do something like this. Christ plus baptism. Christ plus good works. Christ plus something to keep your salvation. It's not Christ plus.

It's Christ alone. It's faith alone and Christ alone. It's all it is for salvation. Romans 11. I mean, Romans 4, 11 to 13. Speaking of Abraham, it says, and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe.

Though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also. And the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but also walk in the steps of the faith, which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

[19:31] For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham to accede through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. It's a big chunk, a lot of words.

What's it saying? You know, it's like Paul, why does Paul have to keep repeating it? Don't you feel like he just keeps saying the same thing when you slow down and read this?

He's the father of all those who are circumcised. He's the father of all those who do good works.

He's the father of all those who do the law, keep the law. No, he's the father of all those who believe.

So he's the father of all those who believe who are not Jewish. He's the father of all those who are of the Jewish tradition. You know, he's writing to Roman believers. Judaism would have been a big part of, of the outreach of the gospel in the first century, you know, but he's the father of all those who believe.

The last part of verse 13, for the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to accede through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

[20:44] How much longer after the promise to Abraham was given was the law given? Some of you probably know. 400 years.

430. Okay. Thank you. 400 years. The promise was given. How many years before the right of circumcision was introduced?

It was. You can look it up. Why? Well, the Jew is trusting in circumcision and the law, right? I am keeping the law. I am of the law. My righteousness will come because I can keep the law. But God saying, no, your righteousness comes by faith. Why would God do this? Why this example of Abraham? So the promise of righteousness by faith could be given to all men. That's what the example is for. That's what Paul's trying to say in these verses.
[21 : 50] If the musicians want to come up, we're going to wrap this up pretty quickly here. Romans 4, 14 to 16. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made no effect because the law brings about wrath.

For where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is a faith that might be according to grace so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham as the father of us all. Doesn't it sound like he's just repeating himself or saying it again almost, right? So like the first part of verse 14, for those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void. What we were just told earlier that faith is the thing, right? Faith is what's required, not the keeping of the law. What does the law bring?

Law brings wrath. We won't talk about that right now. For where the law is, there is no transgression. The law tells you what sin is. Ephesians 2, 8, 9, to sum it all up, Paul says, if you want to turn to those verses, Ephesians 2, 8, 9.

[23 : 11] Ephesians 2, 8, 9. Ephesians 2, 8, 9. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

I hope this is simple, clear message. I don't have more to say. My wife this morning, or yesterday after, she goes, well, what's the application?

I'm like, I don't know. You know, I'm like, I didn't really think about it. It's like, oh, they were saved by grace through faith? I mean, the application is, I can't work for my salvation.

I can't work to keep my salvation. I can't work to maintain a right standing for God. It doesn't mean good works aren't right to do, right? But that does not keep you in a standing.

I think, if you want to know, maybe an application is, wherever you're at right now, up, down, walking away from God, coming back to God, you can have complete standing before God of righteousness.

[24 : 15] I think that's a good application right there. And tomorrow, when you fail, doesn't throw your standing off before God. You're still declared completely righteous. I think we should have energy or peace in our hearts from that.

Right? So that's all I got, guys. So let's just close in prayer and a song. We thank you for your word. We thank you for examples in scripture of Abraham and others who lived a life of faith.

We know that we could not measure up. We know that Christ was righteous and died on the cross in our place. We thank you for that.

In Jesus' name. We thank you for your will. We thank you.