

Romans #8
The Joy of Forgiveness
Romans 4:48

In our last study we saw that “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” **It was not what Abraham had done, but was what God had done for him that saved him.** It was not Abraham's righteousness that saved him, but it was the righteousness of God. Therefore, as we continue our study in Romans 4, Paul continues to use Abraham's life and faith to show us some valuable truths.

Tonight we are going to see the blessedness of having the assurance that our sins have been forgiven because of our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 45, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."

After talking about the fact that an individual is saved by the grace of God, and justified by faith, Paul now tells us, "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." This is almost exactly what we have been told in Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” **Paul is refuting a well-known doctrine that has been passed down from generation to generation, and that is, a person is saved by grace, but he is kept saved by works.** Ladies and gentlemen, the Bible is clear if Jesus does the saving He will do the keeping.

Grace is *powerful, audacious, and dangerous*, and if the children of God ever come to understand its depths, it would begin a transformation so rapid and radical that it might cause Madelyn Murray O'Hare to spin in her grave.

There are many places in Scripture where Jesus shows us the beauty of how grace works. For example, in John 4 we are told the story of Jesus meeting a woman at a well. When she offers to give him a drink, he says, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you fresh living water."

Notice that Jesus did not talk to this outcast woman about her sinfulness but about how gracious God is. You see, Jesus understands the truth Paul shared with us in Romans 2:4 that it is the “goodness of God that leads us to repentance.” Yet most Christians live as if God were stingy with His Grace. We fear His punishment, in the sense that we think He's the High School principal walking the halls, taking down names. “Who did what and who is to blame?”

But God already knows who did what and who's to blame, and he still loves us any way. His interest is in redeeming us, not in keeping us on the hook for our sins.

Unfortunately, many of us Christians live our lives as if we are still on the hook, and as if we have to keep everyone else on the hook. We use weapons of the flesh the sarcastic comment, the angry stare all designed to get people to straighten up and live right.

In contrast, when the woman at the well goes back to her village and says, "Come see a man ... who knows me inside and out." **Nothing is hidden from him,**

and yet he communicates with her in such a fashion that she leaves the well feeling loved and accepted. That is the aroma of *grace*.

Did she get away with her sins? No. They cost Jesus plenty, yet you don't see him browbeating her, or putting a guilt trip on her, or even using the time for a lecture on sexual ethics. Jesus trusts that once she is confronted with God's generosity his Grace that she will be eager to change and conform to God's commands.

It is a classic Christian paradox, isn't it? Just when you think it's time to pull out the Law and read someone the riot act, Jesus reminds us by his behavior that it is much better to embrace that person with a costly love.

And grace does cost. It obviously cost the Son of God everything, and for you to extend grace to those in your life will cost you, just as it cost the priest his silver.

Look at verse 68, "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness apart from works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." **Paul quotes here from Psalm 32 and is offering this quotation from the Old Testament as proof that the righteousness that God offers has always been "by faith."** That is why we have been told in Hebrews 11 that it was "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." And it was "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death." And it was "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." And it was "By faith Abraham, when he was called ... went out." And it was "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob concerning things to come." And it was "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." **God has always been a God that demanded faith from those that would serve Him!**

With those thoughts in mind, I want to talk to you about the joys of being forgiven, as seen in these verses. Paul uses the words, "Blessed are they" and I want to use those same words.

(1) He says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." Psalm 103:11-12 says, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Ephesians 1:57 says, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." **And then we have the matchless passage of scripture found in I John 1:59, "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** **At the cross of Jesus, sin was dealt with, and its penalty was satisfied, and its debt was paid in full.** All that I need for salvation and forgiveness I can find in Jesus Christ.

Surely, there is joy for the man that has had his "iniquities forgiven."

(2) Then he says, "Blessed is the man whose sins are covered." 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your vain manner of life received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." **When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden they immediately began to think and plan in their own minds what they might do to correct their terrible mistake.** Realizing their nakedness they sought to use their own ability, and prepare for themselves a covering. Genesis 3:8 says, "...they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Although God condemned their act of sin, and even cursed the entire creation, because of His matchless love He provided for them a covering, as seen in Genesis 3:21, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

Now listen, in order to provide a covering for Adam and Eve blood had to be shed and something had to die! In spite of what looked like sure failure, God already had a plan. And 1 Peter 1:19-20 tells us that plan was "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained *before the foundation of the world...*"

Ladies and gentlemen, before there was ever a tree growing in the garden, before there was ever a ground for the tree to grow in, and before there was ever an act of disobedience and rebellion, God had a plan! And that plan included the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

Surely, there is joy for the man "whose sins are covered."

(3) Then he says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Listen to Ephesians 1:34, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." The Greek word translated "impute" actually means "to charge." **In other words, one of the joys of salvation is the fact that our sins are no longer charged to us but are charged to the finished work of Jesus Christ.** This is seen in 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The Greek reads like this, "This is real love - not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."

Surely there is joy for the man "to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

And that brings me to Ephesians 2:14-18, " For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." **Jesus Christ died for the whole world.** And when we receive Him as our personal Savior, we become citizens of another world, and stranger and pilgrims on the earth.

The joy of being saved is not reserved for any select group of individuals, but everyone that will come to Him in simple childlike faith.