

## Believing is Receiving

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Test: Romans 4:1-8

Purpose: Paul cites two Old Testament heroes, Abraham and David, as ones that were accepted by God, not on the basis of their good works, but on the basis of faith.

A woman went into her kitchen to find a burglar loaded down with a bunch of stuff he was stealing from her kitchen. Not having any kind of weapon to scare him off, she raised her hand and said "Acts 2:38," and proceeded to quote scripture.



The burglar froze in place and didn't move. The woman called 911, the police arrived and were amazed to find the burglar still frozen where he stood. "What did you say to him that kept him from moving?" they asked the woman. She told them that she had simply said Acts 2:38 and quoted scripture.

The police chuckled and escorted the burglar out to the patrol car. "Why did the woman's quoting scripture scare you so much?" they asked.

"Scripture?" said the burglar, "I thought she said she had an ax and two 38's!"<sup>1</sup>

Acts 2:38 says, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Repent and be baptized,  
in the name of Jesus Christ  
for the forgiveness of your sins.  
And you will receive the  
gift of the Holy Spirit.  
Acts 2:38

John the Baptist called Israel to repent. Jesus called people to repent. This woman in this kitchen called this man to repentance.

Over the past few weeks, we have been examining Paul’s epistle to the gathered church in Rome. Although Paul had not visited the people there in Rome, he longed to be with them so he could impart the tenants of the Christian faith to them.

For therein is the righteousness of God  
revealed from faith to faith:  
as it is written,  
The just shall live by faith.  
Romans 1:17

One of the primary themes of Romans is found in Romans 1:17 which says, “The just shall live by faith.” This particular statement is one that is so simple, yet so difficult to live out on a daily manner.

The problem with attempting to live out our lives in faith is this problem of sin. Sin is what separates us from the love, grace, and mercy of God. Paul, the skilled theologian, masterfully addresses every objection to the assertion of our sin and separation from God.

I have heard some individuals say “What about those that have never heard of God?” Well, Paul addresses that in chapter one. He said they are without excuse. Paul also goes on to address the religious man of the day. The Jews were some of the most religious individuals you would

meet. The Jews boasted of the law and their circumcision and Paul tells them that they will be judged by the law and their circumcision is void if they don’t keep the law.

Chapter three brings the thought home that there are none righteous, no not one. In Psalm 143:1-2, David cries out to God in a penitential prayer saying,

As it is written,  
*There is None righteous,  
No, Not one:*  
Romans 3:10

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications!

In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness.

Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,  
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.”

David knows his heart and knows how sinful it really is. Job as he was being challenged by his three friends, he came to the same conclusion that there was none righteous.

“Truly I know it is so, But how can a man be righteous before God?” – Job 9:2

“What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?” – Job 15:4

Until we reach a point of recognition of our true nature before God – our sinfulness – we will never truly come to God in seeking forgiveness for our sin. We must come down to that point of recognition of our total depravity before God. Once we



realize that we are sinners in need of a Savior, then we can turn and accept Him as our only way of escape.

Religious people are the most difficult people for God to reach. Because when a person thinks their works are good enough for a reservation for heaven, or their holy language and sanctimonious attitude is right, or their family heritage and social pedigree is acceptable, then that self-righteous person thinks they are doing God a favor by coming to church, giving money to the church, singing in the choir, serving as a deacon, or teaching a Sunday school class.

**NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, 'LORD, LORD,' WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

These things are good – but they are not the things that will merit salvation.

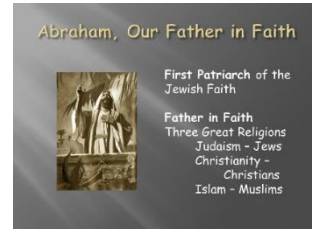
## The Example of Abraham

To further illustrate Paul's point that none are righteous, Paul mentions the father of the Jewish people, Abraham.

As hard as this may seem, Abraham is considered the father of the three major religions today.

The Jews claim Abraham as their father through his son Isaac, who gave birth to Jacob (later named Israel) who in turn gave birth to twelve sons. These twelve sons are the foundation of the Jewish nation.

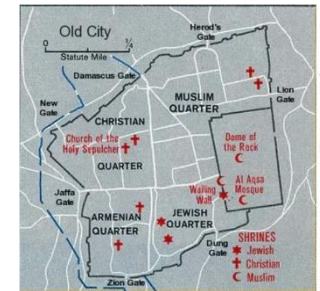
The Arab and Muslim nations claim Abraham as their father through the birth of Ishmael who was born to Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah. If you read in Genesis 25:12-18, you will see that twelve sons were born to Ishmael as well.



The religion of Islam, which was founded by Mohammad, claims Abraham as their father through Ishmael.

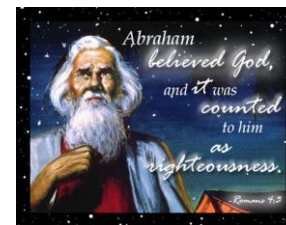
The Christian faith also claims Abraham as one of their founding fathers. It is through the line and lineage of Judah (one of the twelve sons of Israel) that a son by the name of David was born. The opening genealogy in the Book of Matthew tells us there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David. From David until the Babylonian captivity was an additional fourteen generations. And from the Babylonian captivity until the birth of Jesus was fourteen generations. (Matthew 1:17)

Today the city of Jerusalem is divided into four different areas, Jewish, Christian, Armenian (Christian) and Muslim. Each of these faiths having claim to the man Abraham.



Today, the Old City of Jerusalem is divided into different quarters. Some of the important religious sites are shown in the map to the left.

When God told Abraham at the age of 75 years old that he was going to have a child and all the nations would be blessed by it, Abraham believed God. He took God at His word and accepted it as truth. Genesis 15:6 simply says, *“And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”*



Abraham was not perfect in his life. But through faith and belief in God, it was counted towards him as righteousness. On several occasions, Abraham wavered in his belief of God's promise of a child. Abraham took matters into his own hand and took Hagar as his concubine and the son

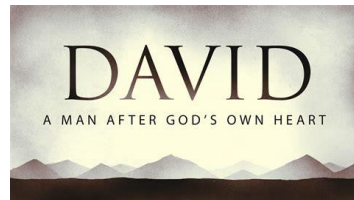
Ishmael was born. At one point as they were traveling through Egypt, Abraham was afraid the ruler of that nation would kill him and take Sarah for his wife. Again, he took matters into his own hand and lied and said she was his sister. Abraham was not a perfect man, but he believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

If we think that God will accept our good works as payment or an entrance fee into heaven, we will never have enough to earn that. Our righteousness is nothing compared to the holiness of God. But when we accept Jesus as our propitiation and atonement for our sin, then the righteousness of Christ is credited to our account. This covers our past, present and future sins. If it didn't then it would not really be salvation at all.

### The Example of David

King David is another example the Jews held in high esteem. The scripture describes David as a man after God's own heart. David knew his heart and understood clearly it was the *hesed* or loving kindness of God that provided salvation.

David knowingly sinned with Uriah's wife Bathsheba. Then when Bathsheba turned up pregnant, he arranged for Uriah to die in battle. The prophet Nathan confronted David with a parable of a rich wealthy man who stole a poor mans lamb. In a fit of anger, David declared the rich man must repay four-fold. It was then that Nathan pointed at David and said, "*You are the man.*"



David paid for his sin through the death of four of his children – the child by Bathsheba, Amnon his firstborn, Absalom and Adonijah. Sorrow plagued David all the days of his life. David's guilt was not put on his account – instead another bore the guilt for him. In Psalm 32:1-2 it says, "*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man whom the Lord shall not impute sin.*"

David realized that by the graciousness of the Lord he was saved. It was not his good works that saved him.

### An Illustration

There was a story told in a magazine "Catholic Twin Circle" dated January 5, 1992. In that magazine was a story about a 108-year-old man named Charlie Shebanek of Richmond California. Charlie spends a good part of his day praying the rosaries on an ancient set of beads.



Charlie said he was trying to get in shape for that final meeting with his Creator. "It's taken me 108 years, but I've finally stopped using profanities and have never been drunk in my life. He went on to say, "We are all born under the curse that Adam and Eve brought on us, so we have to work hard to go to heaven. That's the only purpose of our lives – not fame or fortune. I'm living in hope that when I die, I'll go to heaven, according to the laws of God."<sup>2</sup>

Charlie realizes that life is very short and soon he will be meeting his Creator. I agree that we are all under the curse of sin brought into the human race by Adam and Eve.

But where I disagree with Charlie is that we can never work hard enough to earn a place in heaven. The world in which we live has been deluded into thinking our works are acceptable to God. Our works will never earn a place in heaven for us. It is only by grace, the wonderful grace of God, that we are saved.

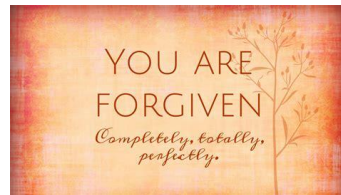
Charlie's theology is close – but not close enough. Charlie is sincere, but sincerely wrong.

### **The Result of Believing is Receiving**

We can draw three important things from this passage concerning our sin. The results of our trusting Jesus for our salvation are:

#### **1. Our Sins are Forgiven**

This literally means our sins are “sent away.” In a real sense when we receive Christ as our Savior, our sins are forever physically removed from our lives. They no longer have power over us.



Psalm 103:12 says, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

Isaiah 38:17 says, *“For you have cast all my sins behind Your back.”*

Isaiah 43:25 says, *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake.”*

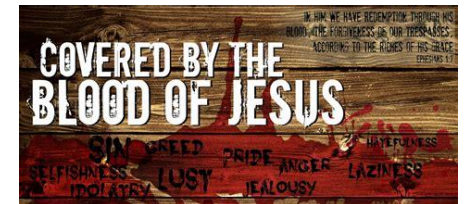
Jeremiah 50:20 says, *“In those days and in that time, says the Lord, The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve.”*

Micah 7:19 says, *“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities, You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”*

Colossians 2:13-14 says, *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

#### **2. Our Sins are Covered**

This word means “covered so completely that they cannot be uncovered.” The blood of Jesus is so powerful that ALL our sins are blotted out. That is your past, present, and future sins have been covered in your faith in Jesus Christ. When we are adopted into the family of God, it is a forever adoption. If my future sins were to send me to hell, then I really do not have salvation. For me, it is an all or none salvation.



### 3. Our Sins Are Not Counted Against Us

The word “*imputed*” in verse eight means “to credit to one’s account and to treat accordingly.” It is the same word as “accounted” in verse five. It means that once you trust Christ for salvation, your sins will never be credited to your account, because they have already been credited to His account.



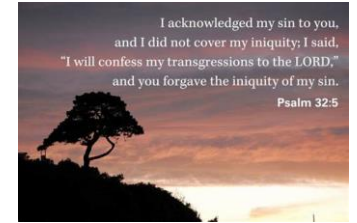
2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “*For He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (Jesus).*”

#### The Result of Not Believing

Maybe you are here today and you have never claimed Jesus Christ as your Savior. You may be here saying, “I am good enough. I am better than other people I know.” I am here to tell you that sin that is not taken care of by the blood of Jesus Christ will work against you like a cancer does to the body.

David in Psalm 32:3-4 clearly demonstrates to us what sin does to us. He said, “*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into drought of summer. Selah*”

But David realized that he needed to come back to God and confess his sins. Verse five says, “*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my soul. Selah*”



God is calling us to come back to him. Will you trust Him today?

#### LET US PRAY

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Mikey’s Funnies – A Burglar Funny, Nov 15, 2022

<sup>2</sup>Sermon Notebook, Romans 4:1-8, The Faith of Abraham.