

Chapter Thirty-two
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
David as an Illustration of Justification through Faith

“¹ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ² For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. ³ For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴ Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁶ Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷ *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Romans 4:1-8).

Paul uses the Old Testament evidentiary principle of the Law to establish his point that justification is through faith and not through religious rituals (such as circumcision, v 9). The Old Testament states if there are two witnesses to something it is to be accepted as true. He has shown Abraham to be a witness to justification by faith totally apart from religious rituals (“works,” v 2). Now in verses 5-8, he uses King David as the second witness to this truth.

“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15).

This is also the purpose of the two great witnesses of God during the Great Tribulation before the second coming of Christ. The fact of these two witnesses will bear overwhelming testimony to the truth that Jesus Christ is the one and only Messiah (and that the Antichrist is not the Messiah).

“³ And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. ⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. ¹¹ And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them” (Revelation 11:3-12).

God uses the Law to testify against itself to establish the fact it is powerless to redeem or justify anyone (3:27-28). Yet, there is an apparent paradox in a holy God justifying the ungodly (Romans 4:5); how can God justify the ungodly? This would be a breach of the Law.

“Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked” (Exodus 23:7).

What the (Mosaic) Law could not do of itself, God in grace did for mankind in His Son. The Law could not justify man, but the gospel tells us how God accomplishes this through the sacrifice of His Son.

“⁶For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:6-9).

“Faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5). For a simple act of faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary, God does not just give the equivalency of a life of perfect righteousness on behalf of the believing sinner; He gives His righteousness to the believer.

“⁹And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).

The hardest of sinners to bring to Christ is not that person steeped in the prison of sin. The hardest person to bring to Christ is the person steeped in his own self righteousness and trusting in some religious ritual.

“¹³But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. ¹⁴Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. ¹⁵Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:13-15).

“¹⁰And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? ¹¹He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ¹²For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. ¹³Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: ¹⁵For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. ¹⁶But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13:10-16).

Note: this refers to the apostates (reprobates) of Israel who had the truth in the Old Testament Scriptures, but refused to hear the truth regarding salvation by faith. These are similar to those steeped in unbelief that Paul speaks of in Romans 1:28 where God “gave them over to a reprobate mind.” Because of this, Christ spoke in parables to them so they could not understand.

⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thessalonians 2:8-12).

David is used as the second witness and an illustration of the imputation of righteousness (justification) by faith apart from religious rituals (Romans 4:5-8). The subject is the blessing of God in imputing righteousness to someone who is not righteous. David certainly falls into this category. This blessing is threefold.

1. Blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness without having to do anything for it (4:6).
2. Blessed is the man “whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (4:7).
3. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (4:8).

This is quoted from Psalm 32:1-2 and relates to what the prophet Nathan said to David right after David’s sin with Bethsheba and the murder of her husband.

¹ Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* ² Blessed *is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*” (Psalm 32:1-2).

Justification is an undeserved blessing of God totally of grace and totally apart from any religious work or ritual (4:6). Forgiveness of sin (having to do with restoration to fellowship with God) is also an undeserved blessing of God to those who have been saved (4:7).

It is important to understand that Paul is quoting from the Old Testament regarding sins being “covered.” This refers to the sins of the Old Covenant believer being covered by the blood and put out of God’s sight. The sins were still there, but covered over until the sacrifice of the Cross. The blood of Christ did not cover over sin (*Kaphar*; *atone* for it). It remits the consequences of sin (condemnation; Romans 8:1) and “washes” the evidence of sin away.

⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. ⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. ⁸ Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; ⁹ Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. ¹¹ And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: ¹² But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³ From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:4-14).

²³ *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ²⁵ Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶ For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸ So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:23-28).

King David was a man who had committed acts of adultery, hypocrisy and, murder, yet his faith was counted for righteousness. Because of God's gift of justification "by grace through faith", God would not put those sins (or any sin) on David's sin account. David's sin account was empty as far as God was concerned. This does not mean there would not be consequences to pay in life for the sins he committed. There are always consequences for sin (cause and effect).

⁷ And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; ⁸ And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. ⁹ Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. ¹¹ Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. ¹³ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. ¹⁴ Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die" (II Samuel 12:7-14).

The price David paid for his sins in cause and affect was he lost his children to worldliness. Even the majority of Solomon's life (his other son with Bethsheba) was wasted in carnal pursuits after vain glory and Hedonism (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11).

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1. Read Deuteronomy 19:15. What point of Law is Paul using in Romans 4:1-8 to establish the truth of justification by faith alone totally apart from religious rituals or religious works? _____

2. How does the above principle relate to the truth of the two individuals of Revelation 11:3-12 and their testimony to the nation of Israel during the Tribulation? _____

3. Read Exodus 23:7. Why does Romans 4:5 appear to be a paradox when compared to Exodus 23:7? _____

4. Read Romans 5:6-9. Discuss how this paradox is resolved in the gospel. _____

5. Read Luke 18:9-14. Discuss how this parable relates to the truth of Romans 4:5 (“faith is counted for righteousness”). _____

6. Read Matthew 23:13-15. Discuss why the hardest people to bring to Christ are those trusting in some religious ritual or their own self righteousness. _____

7. Read Matthew 13:10-16 with II Thessalonians 2:8-12. According to these texts, explain why Christ taught in parables and why this does not apply to anyone in our present day. _____

8. Read Romans 4:5-8. List each of the three blessings of God upon the believer and explain the meaning of each.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

9. Read Hebrews 10:4-14 and 9:23-28. Discuss why it is important to understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament regarding the covering over of sin. _____

10. Read II Samuel 12:7-14. King David was a man who committed adultery, hypocrisy and murder, yet his faith was counted for righteousness and those acts of sin were not put on his sin account. Discuss the consequences of sin in this life according to this text. _____
