

# Faith Alone: Romans 3v27-4v8

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So, as Johnny said, the Bible reading is taken from Romans chapter 3, verses 27 to Romans chapter 4, verse 8.

And the Bible says, where then is boasting? Is it excluded? On what principle? On what? On that of observing the law?

No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too?

Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?

Not at all. Rather, we uphold the law. What, then, shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God.

[ 1 : 0 3 ] What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Now, when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

However, to the man who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against them. Here ends reading. Thank you, Joanna.

Well, let's have our Bibles open there at Romans, and we'll pray together. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you that it is your voice to us, your word written down, so that we can hear about what we are like, about what you are like, what you have done for us, and how we should live in response.

[ 2 : 2 9 ] Father, we pray that you would give us faith. Faith to not only hear what you are saying, but faith that will apply it to our own lives, so that we become all that you call us to be.

We need your help. We rest upon you. We trust you. We rely upon you. Father, help us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. How do you feel about facing God's judgment?

Just think about that for a moment. Standing before God and giving an account to him of your entire life. How do you feel about facing God's judgment?

Well, maybe you feel a little bit like our friend that we've been learning about, Martin Luther. Luther was terrified of God's judgment.

[ 3 : 4 5 ] Here's what he said. You might identify with it. He said, I hated that word, justice of God.

That justice by which God is just, and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust. I did not love. No, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners.

In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. He was so afraid of God's judgment that he joined the Augustinian monks in an effort to make himself a better person in the hope that he would become acceptable to God.

You see, the church that he grew up in had taught him that, well, you had to earn your way to God. You had to earn your salvation. So by doing things like going to confession, taking communion, praying to the saints, doing good deeds, you earned favour with God.

In some sense, you earned grace from God. So in response to all your good things, God would give you some grace that would enable you and help you, equip you to be a more righteous kind of person.

[ 5 : 10 ] And the more grace that you received, the more righteous you became and the closer you got to salvation. It was salvation by works or salvation by efforts.

The problem with that was you were never sure if you had done enough. You were never sure if God would accept you. In fact, trying to earn our salvation would always lead to that experience that Martin Luther had a terrible fear and a hatred of God's judgment.

But as Luther began to read his Bible, and especially as he read the book of Romans, which we have just read together, he rediscovered the wonderful truth that salvation was not earned by our works, but was something that you received by faith in Jesus Christ.

He came to discover that you didn't need to fear or be terrified of God's judgment. Here's how he put it, which is very helpful.

He said, on the one hand, Christ is full of grace and life and salvation. On the other hand, speaking of himself and all people, the soul is full of sins, death and damnation.

[ 6 : 36 ] Then he says, now let faith come between them both. Let faith come between them and sins, death and damnation will become Christ's, while grace, life and salvation will be the soul's.

There's a transfer, an exchange, which happens by faith. So he came to discover that faith was the key. Faith is the means by which we receive salvation.

And this rediscovered truth can be summarized, which is in your handouts or in your news sheets, you can see it there. Salvation is according to scripture alone, so the source is God's word.

It's in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone. And we're going to be thinking about what it means to have faith in Christ alone.

Let's see how that is true from the passage that we read together in Romans. Look at verse 27, chapter 3, verse 27.

[ 7 : 47 ] Where then is boasting? If salvation is all by faith, can anybody boast and say, I've earned it?

Is there anybody here in this room who thinks they can earn their salvation before God by being a better person? Is there anyone here who can look at their life and all the things that they have not done and all the things they have done and say, you know what, I've lived such a good life that God is going to accept me.

Well, what does verse 27 say? Where then is boasting? Well, it's excluded. In other words, nobody can boast. On what principle or on what basis?

On that of observing the law by doing good things? No. But on that of faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

He's making a statement that we don't earn salvation. We receive it by faith. And to help us understand what that means to receive salvation by faith, we're going to look at it under three headings.

[ 9 : 12 ] Here's the first one. Declared righteous. Let's read verse 28 again. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith.

So that's the little phrase justified by faith apart from observing the law. Now, to be justified by faith means to be declared righteous by God.

It's a legal term. Here's what one writer said to explain it, which is very helpful. It's the exact opposite of condemnation.

So to condemn is to declare somebody guilty. To justify is to declare them righteous. And in the Bible it refers to God's act of unmerited favour or God's act of grace by which God puts a sinner right with himself, not only acquitting him, but accepting and treating him as righteous.

Now, most of Romans up to this point before chapter 3 has been showing us that every single person is not righteous.

[ 10 : 34 ] That we are guilty before God. Let's have a look at what that looks like. Look at chapter 1, verse 18. Chapter 1, verse 18.

So it says there, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

So God is rightly angry with all the unrighteous behaviour, all the wickedness, the evil, the godlessness that we see in the world.

All around us, all the time. And we're included in that. Because instead of turning back to God and running to God for help, we've run further away from God.

So chapter 2, verse 5. Chapter 2, verse 5. But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

[ 11 : 51 ] And instead of getting better, and again, instead of running back to God in repentance, we've gotten worse. In fact, there is no desire within us to want God.

So look at chapter 3, verse 9. Chapter 3, verse 9. What shall we conclude then?

Are we any better? Not at all. We have already made the charge that Jews, that is religious people, or Gentiles, non-religious people, everybody, whoever we are, we're all the same.

We're all under sin. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one.

[ 12 : 56 ] You see, even if we wanted to be good people, even if we wanted to improve ourselves, by ourselves, we can't.

No matter how hard we try, we cannot be better people. And what does all that mean? Well, look at chapter 3, verse 20. Therefore, no one, no one, will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law, by doing good things.

So it leaves us in a predicament, in a great difficulty. But the good news of the gospel is, is that God declares us to be righteous.

So look down at verse 28, chapter 3, verse 28, what we just read. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

So there is a way to be made righteous. And it's something that God does for us. In other words, God gives us a righteousness that is not ours.

[ 14 : 09 ] So we who are unrighteous, guilty, deserving of God's judgment, by faith, are now declared righteous, not guilty, and free from God's judgment.

Again, look how Martin Luther puts it. He says, there is a righteousness that God imputes or attributes to us apart from works.

In other words, it is a passive righteousness. So it's not something we work for, something we earn. He asks the question, so then, have we nothing to do to obtain this righteousness?

No, nothing at all. For this righteousness comes by doing nothing, hearing nothing, knowing nothing, but rather in knowing and believing this only, that Christ has gone to the right hand of the Father not to become our judge, but to become for us our righteousness, our salvation.

So you see, I do not make myself righteous, rather God declares me to be righteous. He doesn't make me righteous as a process over time.

[ 15 : 36 ] It's an immediate act. He declares me just as a judge would pronounce in court to somebody, you are not guilty. So God declares us to be absolutely righteous.

Now, we must understand that what that means is it's a change in our status, not a change in our nature.

That means, on the one hand, we will always be righteous before God if our faith is in God. We will always be righteous in our status.

That is never going to change. But at the same time, we will always be sinful in our nature. Always righteous in our status, but at the same time, always sinful in our nature.

So as God looks upon us, as God views me, he looks at me, he says, you are righteous. Yes, you fail and you mess up and you do things that are wrong, but you know what?

[ 16 : 43 ] The sins, the failure, that will never ever change your status. we have been declared righteous by God and that will not change because of my sinful behaviour.

We are justified, declared righteous, not guilty, by faith in him. So that's the first thing that we need to understand.

That we are justified by faith, that first of all means we have been declared righteous, not guilty, before God. The second thing that we need to understand that this faith is faith in Jesus.

We are declared righteous by faith in Jesus. Have a look at chapter 3, verse 22. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

The same is said at the end of verse 26. The one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. So our faith is not just faith in an abstract or kind of a...

[ 18 : 08 ] We describe sometimes people say, oh I've got faith. Well, where is that faith placed? It must be faith that is placed in the person of Jesus Christ.

And this is the same for everybody. Have a look down at verse 29. Is God the God of Jews only? Is this only applying to people who are religious?

Is he not the God of Gentiles or irreligious, non-religious people too? Those who don't read the Bible or go to church? Yes, of Gentiles too. Since there is only one God who will justify, who will declare people right before God, the circumcised, the religious people, by faith, and the uncircumcised, the non-religious, through that same faith.

So it's exactly the same for everybody, whoever we are, whatever culture we were raised in, whatever our religious background might have been, whatever our racial identity, it is the same for every single person.

The only way we can be declared right before God is by faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, faith isn't just an intellectual exercise saying something like, oh yes, I have faith in Jesus, I believe Jesus exists, and I have kind of a faith in him.

[ 19 : 35 ] No, it's a trusting exercise. It's a personal trust or reliance, a complete dependence on the person of Jesus.

Jesus. And our trust is in Jesus that his righteous life becomes my righteous life. Let me try and explain that for you.

When you go for a job interview, or if you can remember back to the last time you had a job interview, you bring with you your CV. CV. And it's a record of your complete performance over your life so far.

It has a list of all your grades, how well you've done in school, in college, all the points that you earned. It might tell you the position that you had in your last job or any promotion that you got and how that was deserved.

And whether you get that job or not will depend on how well you've performed in the past and how well you perform in the interview. So you get the job completely by merit, by all your performances over time.

[ 20 : 48 ] But when it comes to our salvation, when it comes to the record of our life, our CV, if you like, before God, it's not good enough.

The grades that we have scored, the points that we have built up, all the times I've been to church, all the times that I've told people about Jesus, all the times that I've prayed, all the good things that I've done, it will count for nothing.

Zero. So in God's grace, in his goodness, what he does is he offers us the free gift of Christ's performance record.

So what God does is he gives us the CV of Jesus. He credits us with the performance of Jesus Christ. He gives us the righteousness of Christ in place of our unrighteousness.

That is what it means to have faith in Jesus. We're given two examples of what that true faith looks like. Have a look at chapter 4. Two great heroes, Abraham and David.

[ 21 : 59 ] Two religious people. And if anybody was going to make it to God, well, they would. And how did they do it? Well, let's look at the first example, chapter 4, verse 1.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about.

But not before God. So the question here before us is, what did Abraham do to earn his salvation? Well, the answer is absolutely nothing.

There was nothing that he could point to in his life that he had done or said that would earn favour with God. He simply believed in what God said he would do.

Verse 3. What does Scripture say? Abraham believed God. He had faith in God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

[ 22 : 59 ] He did not trust in his own righteousness or in his own record, but in God's gift of righteousness. Another example we're given in verse 6.

David, King David, another hero of the faith. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the person to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

That is what it is to receive the righteousness of God. It means that God does not look upon us the way our sins show us up to be.

He never holds our sin over us or against us. They have been removed completely. David did not trust in his own righteousness, but in the gift of God's righteousness.

[ 24 : 10 ] It's what we call the great exchange. By faith, our record is given to Christ and Christ's record is completely given over to us.

So Christ takes all our unrighteousness, the complete record of how we've lived before God, all our disobedience is taken from us and placed upon Christ.

And in exchange for that, by faith, all the righteousness, the complete record of Christ's perfect life, his perfect obedience, is now transferred and credited to us.

It's the complete exchange, my unrighteous life, for Christ's unrighteous life. Now that means, as we've been saying, that we are now declared righteous, not guilty before God.

But that does not mean that we are perfect, that we never ever sin. It does mean that our position before God has changed, our status before him is clear, we now have the record of his righteousness, so as God looks at us, we are perfectly right.

[ 25 : 30 ] But, it means that I will continue to sin, I will continue to mess up. There will be an ongoing change and process in that as I become more like Christ, but I will still sin.

And that can be a complication for us, because sometimes we think, I'm declared righteous before God, God looks upon me as not guilty, but I do sin and I am guilty.

How is God going to treat me now, because I've messed up? Well, listen to this, again from Martin Luther, although I still sin, I don't despair, because Christ lives, who is both my righteousness and my eternal life.

In that righteousness, in Christ's righteousness, I have no sin, no fear, no guilty conscience, no fear of death. I am indeed a sinner in this life of mine and in my own righteousness, but I have another life, another righteousness above this life, which is Christ, the Son of God.

So can you see what he's saying there, that at one level, yes, I have a status before God, declared righteous, that will never ever change. No matter how many times I sin or fail or mess up, God will always see me as not guilty.

[ 27 : 01 ] That's a wonderful truth, a wonderful way to live life. On the other hand, my sinful nature is I will continue to mess up, I will continue to fail.

Yes, we continually need God's grace and strength and help and the power of his spirit to put sin to death. That will always be an ongoing struggle.

But if our faith is in the Lord Jesus, know this today, you are declared righteous, righteous, no matter how much you sin.

So, we are declared righteous by God through our faith in Jesus Christ. So, it all depends on having enough faith.

If I have enough faith, then I will be saved. Right? If I've got enough faith within myself, I can be saved.

[ 28 : 01 ] Is that right? It's wrong. You see, the danger is we think that faith is something that I have. It comes from within me.

I can muster it up myself. I can kind of spur myself on to faith. But that's wrong. Faith is also a gift from God.

Look at verse 27, chapter 3, back to verse 27. where then is the boasting?

Where's the boasting? If we can say, I did it. I earned my salvation. He's saying, nobody should boast. Let me put it this way.

If somebody asks you why you are a Christian, so if you're a Christian here, and somebody comes up and says, why are you a Christian? And you answer and respond something like this, because of my faith, or because I had faith, you're actually boasting.

[ 29 : 15 ] You're saying, I have faith. It's me. My faith saved me. I had the ability to respond to God. I saw what God was saying and what I was like and what I needed and I mustered up that faith and I trusted in God.

So it's my faith. But that's boasting. That's saying it's coming from me. Salvation no longer becomes God's gift, but something we deserve because of my ability to have faith.

But that's wrong. Let me try and explain that a bit more. Sometimes we can treat faith like our Tesco club cards or whichever shop you go to.

You have your little plastic card, you buy some things, it scans in and you get points put onto your card. And after so many weeks or so many items of buying things, you can cash in your points and get your shopping for free.

Except for it's not really free, is it? The selling point says it's free, but in reality you've had to pay for all of those points in your previous shops. And then what you do is you exchange those points and you get a free bag of spuds or whatever, something like that.

[ 30 : 32 ] Now in the same way we can think that we have to cash in our faith to God. We kind of earn some faith along the way, we add to our faith points by doing good and right things, and when we've built up enough faith points, then we can cash it in and God in return gives us his salvation.

I've got enough faith today, I feel I've got that faith, so I cash it in and God accepts me and God loves me and I know I'm saved.

But on the days where I'm not quite so sure I haven't got enough faith, I can't quite cash it in yet, and where am I? faith is measured like that.

Faith is a gift from God, a faith that is complete and sufficient and enough that comes from God. So look at chapter four, verse four.

Now when a man works, so when you go to your job in the morning, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

[ 31 : 45 ] So when you get your weekly or your monthly wages, it's not a gift that your boss comes and says here's something I'd like to give to you. No, you earned it by your hard work, you deserve it, it's yours by right, it came by your effort, your boss is obliged to give you what is owed to you.

It's not a gift. However, look at verse five, to the man who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

You see, when we receive righteousness, it's a gift from God, it's something we don't earn or deserve, we're not cashing in our hard earned faith, it is a gift from God.

God, so that implies that even faith itself is something that God gives to us so that we are enabled to receive righteousness.

So it's never dependent about how great or how high or how low my faith is, or how great my faith is, but the faith that God gives me to enable me to believe and trust so that I can be declared righteous, not guilty in God's sight.

[ 33 : 13 ] Well, you're sitting there going, well, where do I get this faith from? How can I have this faith for myself? Well, that answer, or that question is answered if you go to chapter 10.

Have a look there just briefly. Romans chapter 10, verse 13. Here's where we get an answer to that question. Well, how do I get that faith?

Where does faith come from for me to be able to believe? So let's pick it up in chapter 10, verse 13. He makes this statement. Everyone, religious or non-religious, who calls on the name of the Lord, that is, when it says calls, that is, who has faith or trusts in the name of the Lord, will be saved.

So we can agree with that, we get that. Everybody who has faith in the name of the Lord will be saved. Where does faith come from? Well, he answers the question, verse 14, how then can they call?

How can they have faith in the one they've not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they've not heard? And how can they hear without somebody preaching to them?

[ 34 : 29 ] And how can somebody preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all the Israelites accepted the good news.

For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our message? So how can we have this faith? How can we believe? Well, the answer, verse 17, consequently, faith comes from hearing the message.

And the message is heard through the word of Christ. So, as we're reading scripture, as we're reading the good news about Jesus Christ, as you listen, as you hear, so God is at work in at the same time by his Holy Spirit, that as we hear the good news about Jesus, God, by his Spirit, gives us faith that we may be able to respond to him.

Other parts of the Bible talk about it, rebirth, a renewing of our life. God gives us faith. As we hear the good news of Jesus explained, God works through his word by his Spirit and enables us to have faith and to trust in him.

So, maybe you're here this morning, you're thinking, I always feel guilty before God. Maybe you've never trusted him. And as you hear, we can cry out to God and say, give me that faith that I might trust in him alone.

[ 36 : 13 ] Maybe, on the other hand, you struggle with your sinful life and you're always bogged down by the fact that, well, I do sin and I get things wrong and I'm so guilty. We need to look at how God views us, that he declares us as righteous in his sight, a gift from God through faith in the Lord Jesus and that status will never change.

You are his forever, which will enable you and encourage you to go on living for him, knowing that we do not have to sin any longer. So, faith alone, it's faith in the person of Jesus Christ and as we exercise that gift of faith from God, we are declared righteous in his sight.

Let's pray together. God, we are you guilty of you you you you you