

**“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’” (Romans 4: 2 - 3)**

Paul is very carefully trying not to offend the ancestors of Abraham, but he is also using that same ancestor to make his point. Abraham was not seen as good because he followed the law or was a good Jew. There was no law and no Jew to follow or be. Abram, and we must include Sarai, left their home town of Ur and went to the promised land, because they believed God had given it to them. Once again, humanity heaps praise on them for their faith, but they did not follow their faith, they followed a word. God’s Word - “Go...” Had God not spoken, Abram and Sarai could not have gone. Once again we see God gifting humanity with what it needs. A word.

I believe all of humanity has the ability to believe in a power greater than the human. This is the one created essence that separates humans from animals. We can believe. We have faith. It is a part of our created gift of life. So, Abram and Sarai can’t be applauded for having faith, or even acting on their faith. They can boast that God has done for them what God has always done for humanity; i.e. given them what they need. Abram and Sarai, and the rest of humanity needed a word - “Go”, and because of that one word, three great religions that grace our world today exist. Abram and Sarai hear a word from God and go. We do not honor their actions and we do not honor their courage. Rather we honor the God that gave the word so that a people may know that they were chosen to be God’s blessing.

**“For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.” (Romans 4: 13 - 14)**

You see, Abraham and Sarah did not know the law because Moses was still 500 years in their future. It was not their law abiding righteousness that made them right with God, it was the gift of faith that allowed them to believe God’s word to them.

**“For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham... Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become ‘the father of many nations’, according to what was said, ‘So numerous shall your descendants be.’”**

So, if we celebrate God’s word given to Abraham and Sarah that inspired their faith, then we should ask what about those who’s faith is not inspired - is it defective faith, or lack of a word from God. Paul’s answer for this comes a bit later, but, “...how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?” Indeed.

  
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# For Whom Christ Died

A 21st Century Approach to:  
The Letter of Paul to the Romans  
By: Rev. David L. Stoner



## Faith - Alone

People often say to me, “Pastor, I wish I had your faith.” Every time I say the same thing, “Well, you do. My faith and your faith come from the same source and is the same gift. I have no more, or less faith than you.” I believe this to be completely true. To have it any other way is to say that God is capricious. Meaning God gives a gift to some that is greater than others. Fundamentally I am opposed to this thought process. How could a God who rescues the world from sin, not want the world to know the sin has been forgiven? How could a God who gives eternal life to the world, not want the world to know about eternal life? Therefore I must agree with Paul, God is not a God of the Jews only, but Gentiles too through faith alone. The same faith, not a programmed faith, or a practiced faith - simply faith - period.

## For Whom Christ Died #4

“Include the Faith, Exclude the Boasting”

### Romans 3: 27

**“Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith.”**

After having established that the power of the gospel is salvation

And that the gospel has a name, Jesus

Paul goes on to unite the church in Rome through their sin, human universal sin

Because of that sin none should judge another which can only lead to a divided church and a divided church is a dying church.

Uniting the church in sin, gives God an opportunity to universally forgive the church (and all humanity) as a gift of grace

Paul then goes on to talk about the true gift of faith. The faith that cannot be our boast because it is a gift from God through the word. This is important because if faith is not a gift, if it is something you earn, if it is a program, or a systematic twelve step approach to nirvana - then humanity is not equal in the eyes of God. There, (once again), are the haves versus the have nots. Paul wants his audience to know that the old rules do not apply. Rather than “Judge” one another on our accomplishments,

**“He (God) did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Rom 3: 25a - 26)**

Verse 25 and 26 is the passage just before Paul asks, “Then what becomes of boasting?” Paul makes us understand that God is the actor here. Not an individual. Not humanity. God’s act of grace through Jesus is the gift that humanity both Jews and Gentiles were needing to be justified in the sight of God. The passage says, **“...they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.” (Romans 2: 24)**

So, if we now read the passage backwards, verse 27 says, **“Then what becomes of boasting...”** verse 26 tells us, **“because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed;”** and finally verse 24 reads, **“...justified by his grace as a gift...”**

We can no longer boast about anything good we do. It is null and void compared to the gifts God has given. And the only way to receive these gifts is to be a human sinner. The condition of sin (universal human sin) is the unifying factor that drives God to the redemption of humanity. Since all have sinned...they are justified by his grace as a gift (vs. 23 - 24).

How different the world would be if we could only get ourselves to understand that the actions of our redeeming God outweigh the actions of our sinful world? If all humanity focused on the loving gift of the grace of God, rather than our pitiful attempt of being good, then all boasting and judgment would have to stop. I’m bad, you’re bad, the whole world is bad - but God is loving good and gives us the grace we fail to give each other.

I know what you are going to say, “That’s too simple. Where’s the catch? What other shoe is going to drop to plunge me into the despair of my sin?” And the real “honest to God” answer is - there isn’t one. There is no catch, no shoe, no complications. God has done this for the humanity God loves.

“But,” you say, “only for the part of humanity with faith who believes, right?” No, that is just adding another shoe, another boast. “Look at me, I believe.” Faith is a gift. PERIOD. It is not something we earn, work for, or accomplish. You cannot strengthen your faith. It is a gift of the God who wants us to believe that we are free indeed. Free from sin, free from death, free from the evil that haunts our thoughts and dreams and future. Freedom a true gift.

