

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: Too Good To Be True
SCRIPTURE: Romans 4:1-12
DATE: November 5, 2017
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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

You've heard it—you've said it—"If it's too good to be true then it probably is." And because that belief is so ingrained in us, it's really hard for some people to believe that God's free gift of eternal salvation is actually free. In the book of Romans—in the first three chapters—the Apostle Paul has established beyond all doubt that the whole world is guilty before God—both Jews and Gentiles all deserve God's wrath. But last week we saw in the last part of chapter 3—that God in His grace has made a way for all people to be declared righteous and acceptable in his sight, and therefore, escape His righteous wrath against sin. And the way we escape God's wrath and judgment is nothing more, nothing less than simple faith in the sacrificial death of His Son (cf Rom 3:21-24, 28). Paul has said that we are justified by faith apart from religious rules and rituals. In chapter 4, he will illustrate this great truth from the life of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation.

Walk thru Romans 4:1-12

Romans 4:1-2 — When we do something good, it gives us something to brag about.

Romans 4:3 (Gen 15:6) —

In this chapter, you have to understand the chronology of Abraham's life in order to understand the theology that Paul is trying to communicate.

The point of the chart is this—Abraham believed in the promise of God *before* Moses wrote down the Law—*Moses/the Law came 500 years later*. Abraham believed God's promise *before* he was circumcised—*before* he became a Jew—when he was still Gentile. So, Abraham believed God and God counted his faith as righteousness *before the Law and before he was circumcised*.

Romans 4:4-8 —

If salvation is something we work for, then it is something God owes us.

Works is about earning and deserving. Grace is about believing and receiving.

1. To whom does God credit righteousness? To the one who does not work for it (Romans 4:5)
2. To whom does God credit righteousness? Ungodly people (Romans 4:5)

3. What is the result of credited righteousness? Sins are not counted against you (Romans 4:7-8; Psalm 32:1-2)

Don't make salvation more difficult than God makes it.

Romans 4:9-12 —

- Abraham was a Gentile when God called him (Gn 12).
- Abraham believed God's promise (Gen 15) before he was circumcised (Gen 17).
- Abraham was "credited with righteousness" when he was an ungodly Gentile.

You see how the chronology informs the theology?

- Therefore: If Abraham was "credited with righteousness" apart from obedience to the law of Moses—which came 500 years later—and apart from being circumcised, then the same grace is available to everyone who believes. All people are justified by grace by through faith in Jesus Christ.
- Conclusion: Abraham is the father of both believing Jews and Gentiles. (Romans 4:11, 16). So, believing the Gospel unites people from all kinds of backgrounds.

For Discussion ...

When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn, but also an ear to share with others what you learn. Keep that in mind as you discuss today's message. How do you need to internalize this message so you could share this Good News with people who are confused about what makes a person right with God?

1. Why will no one ever be able to stand before God and boast about the good things they've done as a basis for deserving heaven?
2. What does it mean that God "credits" righteousness to people who believe?
3. How does the chronology of Abraham's life form the foundation of Paul's theology of justification by faith?
4. What is the relationship between having your sins forgiven and God giving you the righteousness of Christ? Are they the same thing or different?
5. How/why does grace guarantee God's promises?