Salvation is by Faith ALONE (Part 1)

Romans 4:1-15

Introduction:

Many people believe that salvation is by faith; but not by faith alone.

Roman Catholics believe in: “Salvation by Faith”, but not “by faith alone.” {The word “alone” was the key to the reformation.} The RC values of the blood of Christ, but not in the value of that blood *alone*; he accepts the fact Christ is Mediator between God and man, but not that Christ is Mediator *alone*; he acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures, but not their authority *alone”*. {John Phillips: en loc}

I. The Question of Achieving for Salvation – 4:1-15

A. People Who Depend on Their Own works – 4:1-8

This practice is refuted:

1. By Asking Abraham: First of the Race – 4:1-5

We learn about ABE (one of the greatest of the O.T. saints) from Genesis 12:1-3

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, (UR of the Chaldees, then to Haran) From your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

When God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees- then from Haran, he was a pagan idolater.

a. A Look at Abraham – 4:1–3

“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God.” (1-2)

The point here is that, in the matter of salvation, no human being can be exalted - not you; not even Abraham.

“For what does the Scripture say? “*Abraham believed God, and it was* accounted to him for righteousness.”

The word “accounted” is a used in bookkeeping. It is used 11 times in this passage.

We have:

* Accounts Receivable -- What God owes to us -- Nothing
* Accounts Payable -- What we owe to God -- Everything

b. A Lesson from Abraham – 4:4-5

Question: What did Abraham do?

Answer: He did the only thing you can do and still do nothing. He believed.

“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” (4)

If you do anything for your salvation, God owes you salvation. Jesus death was not enough. He died in vain.

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,” (5)

But if you believe, then, on the basis of Jesus death in your place, God gives you salvation. The boasting is in God’s love and Jesus’ sacrifice

Galatians 6:14a

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ…”

2. By Asking David: First of the Royalty – 4:6–8

David was one of the greatest O.T. sinners. This tells us that no human being can be excluded, not even the greatest sinner - U not even David

You remember David’ sins -- adultery with Bathsheba, then ordering the murder of her husband. Nathan confronted him and confessed and repented before God. (Psalm 51)

1. Salvation Freely Imparted – 4:6

“just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:”

Your empty accounts receivable God fills full with the “coin of the realm” Righteousness. That is the “coin” accepted with God.

Accept this pardon from God or request a fair trial before God’s tribunal. Good luck on that one!

As Calvin would said, “Put up your righteous deeds. They are but filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6)

1. Sin Forever Eliminated – 4:7–8

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;” (7)

These sins called for death in the Law. In the Old Testament sins were covered but not taken away. But David confessed to God apart from sacrifices.

Upon David’s confession Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has ﻿﻿put away your sin; you shall not die.” When God forgives, He forgets. He casts it into the deepest sea. God has forgotten David’s sin – yours too. God has forgotten them, you should too.

Corrie Ten Boon said, “God put your sin in the deepest sea; and you’re out there fishing.”

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” (8)

Now we have the negative side - what God will not do. He will not impute sin to your “accounts payable.” The debt has already been paid.

In one figure, we now have a “Lawyer” with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He pleads “His blood” on our behalf. (I John 2.2)

In another figure, if we confess to Him, He forgives us the sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

B. People Who Depend on their Own Worship – 4:9–15

1. Trusting in the Symbols of Religion – 4:9–12

Many people today think that salvation is upon keeping the symbols of the church.

a. Note When Abraham was Given the Symbol – 4:9–10

“Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only,* or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.” (9)

Paul is setting the Jews up with this one. Their answer is going to be, “the circumcised only”

“How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?” (10a)

Now he pulls the rug out from under them,

“Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.” (10b)

Genesis 15:6

“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

That was 14 years before circumcision was ordered by God.

Genesis 17:10

“This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;”

Circumcision had nothing to do with his salvation at all.

b. Note Why Abraham was Given the Symbol – 4:11–12

“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,” (11)

This shows that Abraham is father of the uncircumcised as well as the circumcised.

In fact he was father to us before he was father to them – by 14 years. However, he is still father of the circumcised as well. (vs. 12)

“and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.”

Paul has turned the Jews’ boast upside down. It is not the Gentile who must come to the Jew’s circumcision for salvation; it is the Jew who must come to a Gentile faith, such a faith as Abraham had long before he was circumcised.

2. Trusting in the Statements of Religion – 4:13–15

a. The Promise of the Lord Saves – 4:13

“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

The Jew of Paul’s day thought that the Gentiles had to come to them for salvation. The promise did not come to the circumcised, but to the uncircumcised. Circumcision was not the promise. It was a seal of the promise. And the promise did not come from the Law, but through the righteousness of Faith.

There are conditional promises in the Bible. The conditions are clearly stated and it is clear who is responsible for keeping them. The promises to Abraham and his seed were unconditional and They are guaranteed by the faithfulness of God not the faithfulness of man.

b. The Precepts of the Law Slay – 4:14–15

“For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,” (14)

The Law is contrary to the promise. Law precludes faith, therefore the promise which requires faith becomes of no effect.

“because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.” 915)

The Law does not save it brings wrath. If salvation is based on “achieving” then it is not based on “believing”.

* It is Faith -- Not Works
* It is Grace -- Not Law
* It is Belief -- Not Behavior

Conclusion: