

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Be finding Romans chapter 4, where we left off last week. I heard a country song one time that said something like this, "If it weren't for bad luck I wouldn't have any luck at all." I think some of us are feeling today as we read the newspapers if it weren't for bad news I wouldn't have any news at all. But thank God there is some good news. And it's time for some good news.

You know, preachers never get tired of telling the story of John Newton. He lived hundreds of years ago. You, he wrote books and he wrote sermons, but you're probably not familiar with any of those, but he wrote a song that if you've been around churches at all, and even if you don't go to church, you probably know the song. It's called, "Amazing Grace," "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." Let me tell you about John Newton. He, he didn't start out as a songwriter. As a matter of fact, he had a very godly mother and a very wicked father. His father was a sailor and his mother prayed for him and committed him to the Lord. But as a youngster, he was rebellious and ungodly and he, just as a boy, very young, he left home to become a sailor like his father. And John Newton got engaged in the slave trade and he became a slaver, buying and selling slaves. But then his fortune reversed on him and he, John Newton, became a slave of slaves. As a matter of fact, his mistress who owned him, had him chained to her table and all he would get to eat was scraps that fell from her table. That's how low this boy, this man got. Some sailors, however, had given to this cursing, drunken, ungodly, lascivious young man a copy of the book by Thomas A. Kempis, called, *The Imitation of Christ*, and he began to read that aboard that ship. And one day a ferocious storm came up at sea. John Newton was on the deck, they thought the ship was going down; a great wave washed over the deck of that ship and washed John Newton off the deck and into the angry sea. He, he cried out to God for mercy. Another wave came and washed him back on board. That was all he needed. He, he got, he got right with God and he wrote the song that you love to sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." And when he said, "A wretch," he wasn't, he wasn't just using hyperbole, he really meant it.

Now what is grace, what is grace? May I give you a definition of grace? Would you listen to it very carefully, listen to every word of it. Grace is the unmerited favor and kindness of God shown to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. Now let me give it to you again; grace is the unmerited favor and kindness of God shown to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. And may I tell you something, already if you're saved, you will be saved by grace or you won't be saved at all. Now the good news is the grace. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, Paul has been telling us about the bad news, about sin, wickedness, degradation, depravity, all of the things. He's been talking to the heathen, he's been talking to the hypocrite, he's been talking to the Hebrew, he's been talking to humanity, and he has summed it up in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" That is the bad news that makes the Good News good.

And so, let's begin reading here in Romans chapter 4 verse 1 through verse 5, "What shall we say, then, that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace," there's our word, "but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justified the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Now actually what we're going to do in our study today, we're going to see the Gospel, the Good News, the Gospel, and that's what the word Gospel means is Good News, did you know that, it means Good News. We're going to see the Good News according to three men: according to Abraham, according to David, and according to Paul.

Now, first of all, I want you to see **the grace, the good news that was discovered by Abraham**. Write that down, discovered by Abraham. You see, the very word that says in Romans 4:1, "What did we say then, why has Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh has found," you see that word has found? It's the word we get our word eureka from. It speaks of a discovery. Abraham made a discovery. Now if you haven't been going to church very long, you might say, "Well now, wait a minute, who is Abraham?" Well if you were a Jew you would know who Abraham is, because Abraham is the brightest star in the Hebrew Heaven. Abraham was the first of the Jewish nation, of the Hebrews, and Abraham was the premier saint, he's the beginner of the Jewish race. You can say the founder of their faith. They held Abraham in highest esteem, and in the Jewish mind, if anybody could behave himself into Heaven, it would be Abraham. If anybody could get to Heaven by doing good works, it would be Abraham.

But the Bible says here in Romans 4 that, "Abraham believed God," you see it in verse 3, and that, "was counted to him for righteousness." Now all that is doing is just quoting Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 and it talks about Abraham and it says, "He believed the Lord and He counted it to him," that is, the Lord, the Lord put it on his account for righteousness. Now you see, God had called Abraham when he was a heathen, and in the land of Ur, and said, "I want you to go into a land that I'm going to give you, and I want you to go." And He didn't even really tell him where he was going, he just went out under orders, under sealed orders. But then the Lord appeared to him, and at this time he was a very old man. He was impotent and childless and his wife Sarah had gone through the menopause and her womb was past reproduction. The Bible says, we're going to see later on in this chapter, that it was dead. That is, she could not reproduce and have a child naturally. But God came to Abraham and there in that passage of Scripture that I just referenced, and God said, "Abraham, I'm going to give you a son, and through that son you're going to have children. Matter of fact, look up at those stars, Abraham, you see all those stars, can you count them, you can't count them, can you, Abraham? Well, Abraham, you're not going to be able to count the number of your descendants. I'm going to work a miracle; I'm going to work a miracle in your life." And rather than arguing with God or doubting God, the Bible said, "Abraham believed God." He just believed God. And

God said, “All right, that’s what I want, and I’m going to put you down as righteous.”
“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

What did he believe God for? Well, he believed God for a miracle son. Jesus is a miracle son, isn’t He, born of a virgin? You see, this all just pre-figures Jesus. Abraham believed God for a miracle son and he also believed in God who could bring life out of death. Didn’t Jesus come out of the grave, He did. Well, just as God gave life to Sarah’s dead womb, Abraham just believed this. He had an incredible faith in God. It pre-figures the Gospel of God’s miracle Son, His death, burial, and resurrection, and, *“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.”*

Now, that’s what we’re talking about right now. What does salvation by grace do and what did Abraham discover? First of all, listen, **salvation by grace**, are you listening, **it respects God’s glory**. Now look in Romans 4 verse 2, *“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory but not before God.”* Now what that means is just simply this; that if Abraham could be saved by being good, he could boast about it, he could glory in his own salvation, he could say nice things about himself. But that wouldn’t be saying nice things about God. But when Abraham believed God, he gave God glory. Do you know the best thing that you could do to glorify God? People have tried to do all kinds of things to glorify God, I mean, to gain favor with God. I have seen pictures of people who would take whips and flagellate themselves until they bleed. People have hung by ropes and hooks and, and self-crucifixion in order to glorify God. People have gone on pilgrimages to glorify God. People have given great sums of money to glorify God. But do you know what glorifies God? It’s believing God; it’s believing God.

You see, the Bible says in First John 5 verse 10, *“He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar.”* The greatest thing you can do to glorify God is to believe God. Faith pleases God because it glorifies God, and because faith pleases God, God rewards faith. If you want to please God, believe God, believe God. What is faith? Faith is not saying, “God prove it to me and then I’ll believe it.” No, no. Faith is a response, listen, faith is a response to the nature and character of God. Faith believes God, not for what God has done, but for who God is. You see, when my eye is right, my eye responds to light. When my ear is right, my ear responds to sound. When my heart is right, my heart responds to God and that response is faith. And that faith glorifies God. If a man could be saved by works, God doesn’t get the glory. But when a man is justified by faith, God gets the glory. It’s amazing how many people want to put together faith and works. There’s something about human pride that says, “I want to do it.”

Now suppose Bobby were to say, “Pastor, I love you so much and I’ve just struck oil and I’m very wealthy now and I’m going to buy for you, Pastor, a brand new automobile, and I don’t want a cheap one, I want one \$50,000.” Now he’s going to buy a \$50,000 automobile for me. And he comes to me and he says, “Pastor, I want to give you this automobile.” I said, “Well, Bobby, thanks a lot, fella, that’s really nice. But Bobby, I can’t just let you give me a car like that, it’s too much. Bobby, let me help pay

for that car, Bobby, here. Let's see, yeah, there it is, there's a quarter. Thank you, Bobby." So Bobby has paid \$49,999.75 and I've paid two bits. And I'm driving that brand new automobile and somebody says, "Rogers, nice car you've got." And I say, "Yeah, Bobby and I bought this car." Wouldn't that be ridiculous? Friend, let me tell you something, when you add your two bits' worth of self-effort to the grace of God, you destroy the whole thing. You take the glory from Almighty God. If you go to Heaven, you're going to say, "Jesus paid it all and all to Him I owe." And don't you get the idea that you can add a little bit to it, because when you do, you take away God's glory. You get the glory to yourself. You say, "Look what I did." For in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9 the Bible says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God,*" why? "*lest any man should boast.*" No peacocks in Heaven. You know what they're going to be singing in Heaven? "*Unto Him who loved us and washed us with His blood.*" Revelation 1 verse 5 and 6. That's what they're going to be singing.

We were playing Daytona Beach in high school and there was about three inches of water on the field, it's coming up over our shoe tops. And we were beating Daytona Mainland, it was horrible, it was wet, our uniforms were just soaking wet. And somebody put a pass in the air and our defensive tackle, who was very overweight, had that pass just landed there and stuck. He looked down and saw it and put both arms around it. He had intercepted a pass; first time in his life. Now I want to tell you, he was the slowest man on our field, slowest man on the field, but do you know, as fate would have it, he ran that thing back for a touchdown. We blocked every man three times in order for him to get down there. Here's the way that guy would run. "Right leg, left leg, right leg, but he ran it back. Now would you know that I spent the night with that guy that night? We shared a room afterward. All night long I heard about him running those moves, running that ball back down that field. Boy, I'd hate to spend eternity with a guy bragging about how he got to Heaven. I want to spend eternity with people who are giving the Lamb all the glory as we sang this morning, "*Unto Him who loved us and washed us with His blood.*"

What does salvation by grace do? It respects God's glory. And I'll tell you what else it does; **it receives God's gift**, it receives God's gift. Now look if you will here again in Romans 4 verse 3, "*It was counted unto him for righteousness.*" Now that word counted is used a number of times in this chapter, but if you look at it in the English you wouldn't necessarily see it. Because the same word is translated imputed and the same word is translated reckoned. Look if you will in Romans 4 verse 3, "*It was counted to him.*" In Romans 4 verse 6, "*God imputed, imputeth righteousness.*" Romans 4 verse 8, "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*" The last part of Romans 4 verse 9, "*That faith was reckoned.*" Romans 4 verse 10, "*How then was it reckoned.*" The last part of Romans 4 verse 11, "*Might be imputed.*" Go down to Romans 4 verse 22, "*Therefore it was imputed.*" Notice in Romans 4 verse 23, "*That it was imputed to him.*" Notice Romans 4 verse 24, for, "*Us also, to whom it shall be imputed.*" Over and over and over he's talking about something called imputation. Now don't you check me out! You say, "There you go with a theological word, I don't want to

hear anything about imputation, it has nothing to do with me.” Friend, it has everything to do with you, it has everything to do with you. Because the way that you’re going to get saved is for God to count something, to reckon something, to impute something to your account. Now this is what God does, God reckons or imputes or counts righteousness to you when you have the faith of Abraham.

Now, let me tell you something about imputation. All right, now listen very carefully, and it’s all going to come together and make sense. Adam’s sin was imputed to you. Adam’s sin was put on your account. You know our son David is a missionary and Joyce and I sometimes want to give him a gift and rather than sending him a check in the mail, we just say, “David, we’ll put a check on your account. We’ll just add it to your account. It’s there, you can write a check overseas because we’re going to put it in your account over here.” Now we impute that to his account. The reason he can write a check for it over there is because we put it on his account over here. It simply means just to charge or reckon or put on your account. Next time you go to the department store don’t say, “Charge it,” say, “Impute it.” She won’t know what you’re talking about, but then you can witness to her. Just say, “Impute it! Charge it to my account, put that on my account.” Now that’s what it means. Now Adam’s sin was imputed to you. You say, “I didn’t vote for Adam. What Adam did didn’t have anything to do with me.” Oh? Well if Adam hadn’t had any children, where would you be? Think about it. Adam, when he sinned, became a slave of sin, and the son of a slave is a slave. And besides that, you then inherited Adam’s sinful nature and Adam’s guilt was put on you. Let me give you a verse for that. Romans 5 verse 12, “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men.*” That is, death was imputed to all men. We got it from Adam. So, sin was imputed to you through Adam.

Got that? All right, now watch it. Adam’s sin was imputed to you. Our sin was imputed to Jesus. That’s what the Gospel is all about. You’re in chapter 4, look if you will in verse 25 of chapter 4, look at it, it speaks of Jesus, “*Who was delivered for our offenses,*” not for His own sin, but for our offenses. Put down Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, “*For God hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.*” You see that? “*God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin.*” Jesus was a sinless, spotless Lamb of God, thank God for that. But God made Him to be sin for us. God didn’t make Him a sinner, He was not a sinner, but God made Him to be sin. Adam’s sin was put on me. My sin was put on Jesus. Jesus carried my sin to the cross.

In Leviticus chapter 16 verses 1 through 10, there’s a ritual there, it’s the story of the scapegoat. Have you ever heard the term scapegoat? Well, in Old Testament times God gave so many pictures and illustrations of salvation. And what they would do, they would take two goats and bring those two goats to the door of the tabernacle. One goat would be slain, his throat would be cut, the blood would be spilled out, and that would picture Jesus on the cross, in agony and blood, dying for us. But then Aaron, the High Priest, would take both hands and lay his hands on the head of the other goat, the live goat called the scapegoat, and confess the sins of the

people upon the head of that goat. And then that goat would be led out into the wilderness never to return, picturing our sins being carried away by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And when Aaron laid his hands on the head of that goat, the sins of the people of Israel were being placed, imputed, charged, reckoned upon the head of that goat, picturing our sins being laid upon the Lord Jesus.

Now, watch this, Adam's sin was imputed to you, your sin was imputed to Jesus and now, thank God, Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us. That's the Gospel. His righteousness is imputed to us. Notice Romans 4 verse 3, "*For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted,*" reckoned, imputed, "*unto him for righteousness.*" Now that is the grace that Abraham discovered.

Second thing; not only the grace that Abraham discovered, but **the grace that David described**. Abraham discovered it, David described it. Now begin reading in Romans 4 verse 6 on through verse 8, "*For even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.'*" Now, you have to understand, as they would read this, they would think of Abraham as the greatest of saints, they would think of David, perhaps, as the greatest of sinners because David had committed a terrible, horrible, egregious sin. David had committed adultery and in order to try to cover that adultery, David had committed murder. It's a dark and dirty tale, and he had just broken God's commandments and David was worthy of death, but God brought him to a place of repentance. He received the grace of God and he wrote a Psalm telling about it and that's what Paul was quoting, is Psalm 32 verses 1 and 2. After he'd experienced the grace of God, he wrote this, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, blessed is the man in whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" Now, you see, there was nothing David could do. I mean, he deserved death; his case was hopeless apart from God's amazing grace, that's Romans 4 verse 6, "*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.*" There wasn't anything David could do, he was hopeless, and God put on his account righteousness.

Now I want you to see how he describes that righteousness, because this'll make you happy, this'll make you happy if you understand it. First of all, **iniquity is forgiven**, do you see that? Look at it, Romans 4 verse 7, saying, "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.*" Now in order for God to forgive your iniquity, God has to pay the price. There are no free pardons, not in Heaven. If any sin is forgiven, the one who does the forgiving is the one who bears the penalty.

Let's go back to Bobby again, since we're using him for illustration this morning; I want that quarter back, okay? Now, just to be sure. All right, now let's suppose that Bobby stole \$10 from me. And he comes back and he is so stricken, so smitten, he says, "Pastor, I stole \$10 from you and I don't have it to give it back." And

I say, "All right, Bobby, I forgive you." Now the minute I forgive him, what happens? It cost me ten bucks, it cost me ten bucks. You see, somebody pays, so when I forgive that sin, at that moment I absorb the penalty. That's what Jesus was doing on the cross. God is not overlooking that sin, God Himself is paying the price of that sin. And by sovereign grace he is being saved. Somebody wrote these words, "I owed a debt I could not pay. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe." "I owed a debt I could not pay. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe."

Iniquity is forgiven, but it's even better than that. **Sins are covered.** Look, "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,*" Romans 4 verse 7, "*and whose sins are covered.*" You know, even if I forgave him, I would still know that he had done it. But when God forgives, God forgets. God says in Micah chapter 7 verse 19, "*I will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*" There are depths in the ocean that nobody has yet probed. As the mountains are high, the depths are deep. There are places where the pressure is so great that nothing could even sink there. It's as dark as ink, as black as midnight, and that's where God has put your sins. God says in Isaiah chapter 38 verse 17, "*Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.*" I love that. I've thought about that often. If my sin is behind God's back and that's where they're going to stay, can God ever see my sin again? Well, my sin's back here. Suppose He turns around to see where they are. They're still back here, no matter where He looks, my sins are behind His back. Psalm 103 verse 12, "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.*" Now I can measure North Pole to South Pole, but you can't measure East from West. How far is West, how far is East. No, it just goes on and on and on and on. You see, David says, "Oh, my iniquities are forgiven." Yes, hallelujah! But my sin is covered, it is gone, it is, "*Buried in the depth of God's forgetfulness.*"

Well you say, "That's good, could it get any better?" Yes it does. Now I want you not to miss this. Look in Romans 4 verse 8. Not only does He forgive your sin, not only does He cover your sin, hey folks, now don't miss this. Look in verse 8, "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord,*" are you ready for this? "**Will not impute sin.**" Don't miss this. God, when you get saved, will never put sin on your account again. He will not impute sin to you. Now you say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, what if I get saved and then I sin again?" Did I hear you say what if? You know, some people have the idea that, "If I'm living right when I die, I'll go to Heaven." Well if that's what you're counting on, you're going to Hell. Well you say, "Well I was pretty good." Listen, I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven. I mean the best, much less some bad ones. You know, we need to understand what sin is. The Bible says in James 4:17, "*To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" The Bible says Romans 14:23, "*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*" The Bible says Proverbs 24 verse 9, "*The thought of foolishness is sin.*" Do you think that your goodness is going to get you to Heaven? No! Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, blessed is the man whose sins are covered, and blessed is the man to whom God will not impute iniquity. If He were to put one half of one sin on your account, you'd die and go to Hell; one half of one sin. He's a holy God, but God will not impute iniquity. Now that doesn't

mean that you can sin and get by with it. He'll carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you. Hebrews 12 verse 6, "*Whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.*"

That's the reason why we need to keep a short account with God, but God will never put that sin on your account. If God put that sin on your account, you'd have to get saved all over again, but God will not impute sin. Now folks, listen, I'm telling you, when you understand grace, you can understand why John Newton wanted to write that song. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

There was the grace that Abraham discovered; there was the grace that David described. Now finally, there's **the grace that Paul discloses**. Now look at it here if you will, finally, beginning now in verse 9 and this is the wonderful thing. Romans 4 verses 9 through 11, "*Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only,*" what does he mean by the circumcision, the Jews, they were called the circumcision, "*or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that the faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.*" Now what does all this mean? What Paul is saying is this. First of all, hey, folks, he's talking to you now, he's talking to Gentiles. We may have some Jews here today and I hope we do, but he's talking now to the Gentiles. And he's saying, "Look, Abraham discovered it, David described it, but I want to tell you, it is for everybody; not just for the Jews, but for the uncircumcised also, the uncircumcision," that's what he's talking about, the Gentiles.

Now what he is saying is this, now listen very carefully. "**This salvation doesn't come by ritual.** It doesn't come by ritual." You see, circumcision was a Jewish ritual that, as he said in Romans 4 verse 11, "*It was a sign and a seal.*" But he said, "When was Abraham saved? Before or after that sign and that seal?" Before! Let's, how does that apply to us today? Are you saved before or after baptism? Before! The Bible doesn't say, "Be baptized and believe," it says, "*Believe and be baptized.*" Mark 16:16. And the minute you believe, you're saved. Now some people will say you have to be baptized in order to be saved. Well that's ridiculous. If you say you have to be baptized in order to be saved, you know what you do? You take the whosoever out of the Bible. A man in the desert couldn't be saved because no water. Man in an airplane couldn't be saved, no place to baptize him. A man in a submarine, surrounded by water, couldn't be saved without drowning at the same time by opening the door. I'm telling you, listen, it's ridiculous. You'd have to say, "For whosoever shall believe and shall be near water and is fortunate enough to have a preacher, of my denomination, shall be saved." Hey, that's silly, that's silly! The Bible says it sweetly, plainly, sublimely in Acts 16 verse 31, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*"

When Peter baptized the household of Cornelius, he said in Acts 10 verse 47, “Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized, **who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost?**” They'd already received the gift of the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. Listen to me, friend. What is Paul saying? We see it discovered by Abraham, we see it described by David, and then we see it disclosed by Paul. He is saying, “It is not by ritual, it is not by resolve, it is by reception.” You just receive God’s amazing grace.

Well, let me just tell you quickly another little story. I started telling you a story about a song about God’s amazing grace and John Newton. There was another man named William Cowper. William Cowper was so tormented in his mind. He was so distraught, he lived in Paris. He was going to kill himself. He went down to the Seine River that runs through Paris and four times he tried to get enough courage to throw himself in the river Seine. He couldn’t do it, so he went and got some poison, and he was going to take the poison. Three times he put the poison to his lips but he couldn’t do it. So he said, “I’ll take a gun and I will shoot myself,” and twice he took a gun and put it to his temples but could not release the trigger. And then somebody told him about Jesus and William Cowper wrote these words, “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”

That’s the grace of God, that’s the grace of God, that’s the Good News. That’s what Abraham discovered, that’s what David described, that’s what Paul discloses, and friend, that’s what you need, is God’s amazing grace.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. There aren’t going to be any peacocks in Heaven, not going to be any boasters in Heaven, only those who’ve trusted the grace of God. Would you pray like this? “Lord Jesus, I need to be saved, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Jesus. I trust in Your grace, in Your love. I believe You. In Your holy name, Amen.”