

Romans 4 : 9-16 - Saved By Grace Alone – 03 Jul 2011

So turn with me to Romans chapter 4 and we'll consider verses 9 to 16 this morning. Romans chapter 4 and verses 9 to 16. First of all let me warn you - not easy verses to read but we will, by the grace of God, try our best to make it understandable, applicable and meaningful for all of us.

So let us look at Romans chapter 4 and verses 9 to 16 (KJV).

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the 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:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

Surely we recognise that this is a difficult piece of Scripture to read, to explain, to understand, but I trust that God will help us to do so this morning. And I hope you

put on your thinking caps because I'm sure you recognise these are verses which require a lot of thinking, meditating, reflecting and poring through. So please come ready and ask God, even right now, to teach you.

00:02:43

Well, I want to start with something light, something easy. I want to start with a trivia. You know what is a trivia? Trivia is asking you questions that are quite trivial. They don't really matter but nonetheless they are interesting. This week I learnt a few things from trivia:

Number 1: Flamingos are pink because of what they eat.

None of you look pink because you don't eat what they eat. But you can search it out and flamingos are pink because of their diet.

A second trivia I know is: Cows sweat through their nose.

Now that's not very nice - the sweat keep dripping out of the nose. But that's what it is, it's a fact, it's a trivia. It's okay if you know about it. It's also alright if you don't know about it. It's not going to harm you or hurt you if you should not know this. It's trivia.

The (Volkswagen) beetle was Hitler's idea.

It's a trivia.

Now this is interesting...

Wayne Allwine, the voice of Mickey Mouse, was married to Russi Taylor, the voice of Minnie.

How romantic, isn't it?

A chicken survived 18 months without a head.

Don't ask me how this is possible. I don't think this is possible for any human being but somehow the chicken survived 18 months without a head.

The yo-yo was originally used as a weapon.

I was told it is used as a weapon in China.

Giraffes clean their ears with their 18+ inch tongue.

I dare guarantee none of you will ever kiss a giraffe henceforth. Don't let it kiss you too.

Koala bears sleep 22 hours a day.

Wah, how you wish you are a koala bear. Can sleep more.

Some ribbon worms eat themselves if they can't find food.

All planets rotate anti-clockwise except Venus.

Have you wondered why women are so different? They rotate a different way from the rest of the world.

The highest Scrabble score was 1,049. Now if you play Scrabble, you may appreciate that high score.

A newborn kangaroo is small enough to fit in a teaspoon. Amazing!

Beaver's teeth never stop growing. That's why they need to chew.

And this is gross.

Adult feet produced a quarter of a cup of sweat a day. Ee, you squeeze it, you collect in a cup, you can drink it man.

00:05:31

Well these are trivial questions in a trivia. They don't really matter. It's okay if you know; it's alright also if you do not know the answers. But what we're going to study in the book Romans is far from trivial. The book of Romans tells us about the message of salvation. I think there is no greater, more important message than the message of the book of Romans. That God is giving his salvation to those who would believe in Him. I think there is no grander message than that God will make sinful man right with Him. The book of Romans is therefore foundational to our Christian life because this is the most important message of life. I know all of us would pour in much effort for important things in life. Maybe your child is going to a primary school. Just like my son still got three years more to go but already my wife and I we are thinking about primary school. We are looking at the websites. We are searching

kiasu parents.com because to us this is important. And we will put in effort to study, to research to find out what is the best. Maybe some of you are investors. You deal with stocks and I'm sure you will pour in hours upon hours looking at the graphs, the charts, the figures, because this is important to you. Maybe some of you will be going for surgery. And you have a medical illness and you do not know what it's all about. But you know this is important and so you begin searching it up on the web, in the library. You talk to doctors, you talk to friends. You would pour in hours; you will put in great effort, just to know more. Maybe you want to buy a house today, a big purchase today. You would pore through again the data, the charts; look at this from every angle possible so that you will be thorough in your research, so that you may be confident when you have to make that decision. I think there is no greater decision, no greater truth, and no greater message in life than the message of Romans, of God's salvation given to those who would believe in Him. And therefore it is necessary for us to spend our time, to spend our considerations and if I may say, your brain juices, poring through, considering the Words of God. You see, it easy for us to say well I'm saved and let me just moves on. No, God knows this is important for us and He wants us to have a strong foundation in the Gospel message of salvation. Therefore, it is necessary for us to trust in the wisdom of God, to go line upon line, precept upon precept that He would build up our foundation of salvation and the Gospel.

Near my house, there is a development, a boutique development for a condominium. For months on end I have observed that piece of land, it lies waste. I mean when I look down from the overhead bridge it's just mud, it's just soil. For a long time it seems to lie waste. Now I see trucks, vehicles go in and out occasionally; I see some pillars being built into it. But for a long period of time it looked so non-exciting, it looked so boring, it looked so slow. And it's almost like they're taking a long time to build a structure. But just this week as I was walking across the overhead bridge, it struck me that it seemed just overnight the building is now already up. I can see the structure. It is exciting. It is so quick, so fast. But then it struck me that the building that seems to be built up overnight could not could not have been built up overnight or in such rapid pace without months and months of foundational work. It couldn't have succeeded without months and months of hard work piling in the foundations. Now, foundation work is boring. It's not exciting. You won't see much but it is vital for the integrity of the building. And so it is. As we come to the book of Romans, as we study the message of salvation, of righteousness, it is often times not very exciting. It's not the usual motivational, inspirational message where you after the sermon walk out and say I will live for Jesus. Maybe not. And even in the midst of

studying the book of Romans, listening to the sermon, it is hard work piling, piling, line upon line, precept upon precept. It's not exciting, it's hard work, but let me tell you it is absolutely fundamental. It is absolutely foundational. Doesn't the Bible command us to study to show ourselves approved? Doesn't the Bible tell us that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that we may be complete? The Bible is given, especially the book of Romans, gives us that foundation so that we may mature, so that we will not be like children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. So, all that is said that you may appreciate the wisdom of God in the Words He gives us in the book of Romans. You see it's not up to me to decide what to preach. It's what God has written in the book of Romans. And He has His purpose; He has His blessings as we pore through the depths of the glory of Scripture.

00:11:44

One other point and it is this. I think the ability to think, to meditate, to deeply consider the Word of God is very intimately related with maturity. I see in Hebrews chapter 5 (Hebrews 5:13,14)

"For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Hey, we live in a world where we just want milk. Ah, give me processed stuff. Just tell me, just tell me. No need to go through the thinking process. But it is necessary for us to think, to discern, and to have our senses exercised that we may be able to fully mature as we digest the teachings of the Word of God. Now again, I already warned you this morning's message is going to be... I say so much so that you will not fall asleep on me later on. I say so much so that you are primed to realise we're going to pore, consider deeply the Words of God. I'll try to make it as simple as I can. But it will not be beneficial to you without the necessary meditation and thinking on the part of the believer. God's intention is to bless you as you consider His Word faithfully.

Now allow me, this morning, to kind of give you a recap because there may be some of you who are new, what has transpired in the book of Romans up to this point of time in Romans chapter 4. Someone said this very well. People aren't truly saved

until they are truly aware they are lost. Let me say it again. People aren't truly saved until they are truly aware they are lost, in their sins of course.

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You see there is no true salvation until we realise we are sinners in need of salvation. That's why you can't come in and tell someone I have a wonderful message for you: God loves you, Jesus loves you the way you are and He just wants to bless you. He wants you to feel good about yourself. He wants to bump you up a few notches in the scale of success. He wants to help you hit a few home runs. He wants to help you straighten up your slice in golf. That's not the Gospel. The Gospel is God's salvation for us, to save us from sins that will damn us to hell. And until we come to terms with that, until we come to grips with that, there can be no real salvation. That's what Paul sets out to do in Romans chapter 1 to 3. Boldly, he puts forward that man is in sin. He sits under the wrath and condemnation of God because he is sin. He is totally depraved. He is absolutely helpless and hopeless in sin. And when we come to realise that, it drives us to the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ. So for the first three chapters Paul puts this strongly and convincingly across.

00:15:25

He comes to a turning point in chapter 3 where he speaks of the justification, how God is going to declare us righteous. I want you this morning to look 2 Corinthians 5:21. It's a fresh look at what Paul has written in Romans chapter 3. How does God save us? How does God justify us? How does God see us as righteous? 2 Corinthians 5:21 the heart of the Gospel. It says, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Look at the words again. For He (that is God) hath made Him (that is Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin. The Bible tells us Jesus knew no sin. He is God, He is the son of God, and He is spotless, pure, undefiled. He has never sinned, not for a second in His life. But the Bible says God (the Father) made Jesus sin for us. Jesus was made sin. Jesus was treated as if He is bearing, He has sinned all the sins of those who would believe in Him. God punished Jesus as if He had sinned all the sins of those who would believe in Him. He made Jesus to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It's as if we live that life of Jesus. My friends, this is the great doctrine of substitution and from there we get complete forgiveness. Because when God looks at the Cross he sees us, He sees me. And when God looks at me, he sees Christ. How is man to be justified – not in his works, not by his own merit. He can only be justified because of what Jesus had done. God hath made Christ to be sin

for us that we then might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus gives us His righteousness. He suffered for our sins. That is the heart of the Gospel. And that is Romans chapter 3.

00:17:54

But how are we to receive salvation? Well, that's where we come to in the last sermon. A man receives the salvation of God through faith alone, sola fide. And He exemplified this teaching through two old Testament heavyweights. First man Abraham, second man David. And these two men, great men, have been saved by faith in the Saviour alone. This morning we are continuing with the thoughts of apostle Paul. He is going to help us explore salvation in all sorts of angles so that it will be thorough, so that your foundation will be strong. He's going to do that piling work in your life if you apply yourself to the study and the meditation of Scripture.

There is a question that is put forth in verses nine onwards. The question is this: Paul, I may agree with you that a man is justified by faith, just like Abraham was. But Paul wouldn't you agree with me that Abraham was also circumcised? Paul, doesn't it mean then that a man must also be circumcised in order to be saved? Paul will not allow this question to be left to chance. He will seek to answer them. But before we do so, before we look at his answer, let's bow for a word of prayer and ask God to teach us.

Father, we acknowledge the difficulty of the words before us and yet at the same time we know and trust that Your Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and He can lead us into all truth. So would You do that right now and help us to understand the full intent, blessings, glories, of the message of righteousness and salvation in Your Word. So bless Your people. We pray in Jesus Name. Amen.

00:20:15

How does Paul answer this question?

Paul had experience with this question because this question is not a fictitious one. It is a clear and present danger to the early church. In Acts 15:1 there were certain men which came down from Judea and they began to teach the people except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses you cannot be saved. The church had already been preaching justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone but then in the midst of it all, people are still saying justification by faith is not enough, you need to be circumcised after the manner of Moses. In fact I was told that there was a pastor, his

name is Ray Steadman, in the States you may be familiar he has now gone on to be with the Lord, he's the mentor to Chuck Swindoll and people like Luis Palau. And there was a young man that came to Pastor Ray Steadman one day and says Pastor would you circumcise me? Pastor Ray Steadman said he blinked his eye several times couldn't believe what he heard and asked him why do I need to circumcise you? Why do you want to be circumcised? The young man says because the Bible says except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses you cannot be saved. Wow, so what does Scriptures say to this? From the life of Abraham we're going to see a very good answer to this query. It's a burning question in the first century church and how is this resolved? Paul says in verse nine (Romans 4:9) cometh this blessedness, cometh this salvation, this forgiveness, this justification, does this blessing come upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? So, is salvation given to only the circumcised people or also to the uncircumcised people? He says then thinks about your father Abraham. He says, for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. (verse 10) Now how was it then reckoned? Was he circumcised or was he uncircumcised? If you want to ask the question is circumcision necessary for salvation he says think about father Abraham. When he was saved, when he was justified, when he was declared righteous, was he circumcised or uncircumcised? The answer is he was uncircumcised because; he goes on to say, not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. Now I want you to tell me where in the Bible does it say that Abraham was circumcised. Very easy, not very hard to find. All right, let me help you. Where does it say that Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness? Come on it was last week. Genesis chapter 15. Turn your Bibles to Genesis chapter 15. Don't be lazy alright, turn your Bibles. Look at the Bible, mark your Bible, do your highlight, whatever it is. These are key passages of Scripture. Genesis chapter 15 and look at verses five and six. I love this passage, I shared it last week, I'll say it again this week. Genesis chapter 15 verses five and six we are told that God said Abraham come out and lift your eyes, look at the heavens and behold the stars. And God said now look at the stars, number them and I tell you so shall thy seed be. Wow, some of us may think that God's English is no good or God's language is no good. No, it's absolutely perfect; it's precise down to the letter. God is not having bad English in that so many stars you say it singularly but there is a spiritual intent behind it because if you cross reference with Galatians 3:16 like John 3:16, if you cross reference Galatians 3:16 you would see that Paul made mention that God said to Abraham, "And to thy seed" and not to seeds as of many but to thy seed as of one because this is a prophecy, a promise about the coming Saviour Jesus Christ. In verse six of Genesis 15 we are told that Abraham believed God. What did he believe? Did he believe God in the general way that God is good,

God is gracious, God is wonderful? No, he believed God, I believe, in a very specific way that God would send a saviour because in John 8:56 Jesus himself said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he was glad." So Abraham had a very specific faith in the coming saviour. And so it was at that night, at that juncture, that God said Abraham believed Me and I would credit it to him My righteousness. Beautiful! At that point of time Abraham was still an uncircumcised man (Genesis 15). His circumcision occurs in Genesis chapter... Of course you know because as I have been explaining you just flip and flip and look at Genesis 17. That's good all right Genesis chapter, say it with confidence chapter 17 and verse 11. You can see there in Genesis 17 and verse 11 that was when Abraham was circumcised. Genesis 15 to Genesis 17 covers a span of at least... anyone knows how many years? This is harder. Today I didn't bring any presents – I should have. But if you can give me the answer I will treat you to lunch later on. Just come to me, no problem. From Genesis 15 to Genesis 17 there is a gap of how many years? The answer... at least 14 years. How do you know that? Well look at Genesis 17 verse one it says that Abraham was how old? 99 years old. Look at Genesis 16 and verses 15 and 16. How old was he? Eight score 6 years, 86 years. There's a gap of 13 years and you need one year for pregnancy to take place, isn't it, for Ishmael to be born. And so you add 13+1 Genesis 15 is at least 14 years before Genesis 17. Now this is amazing, this will be shocking to a Jew, because a Jew has always thought that Abraham father Abraham was saved because he was a Jew, he was a circumcised man. No, Abraham was saved when he was still a Gentile. And to make things very very clear that there is no doubt, Abraham was justified 14 years before he was circumcised. So circumcision is not necessary for salvation especially when you think about the life of Abraham. So it is very convincing in a chronological argument that circumcision is unnecessary for salvation. Father Abraham exemplified this. Now the question therefore is what is the purpose of circumcision. If circumcision can't save me, why do I need to be circumcised? Well, Paul explains too, verse 11. He says, "And he received the sign of circumcision a seal of the righteousness." So Scripture informs us that circumcision is a sign, it is a seal. Now we all understand what a sign and a seal is. Imagine today you are driving in the North-South Highway towards Malacca and after driving three hours you see a sign pointing to your left, having the words 'Malacca'. Now which one of you would stop the car, open the door, get out of the car and climb on top of the sign and shout I am at Malacca? Any one of you would do that? Well if you do that you would be caught by the police for vandalism number one and then sent to the mental hospital because something is wrong with you because what that was is merely a sign. It's not the real thing. What saved Abraham? Faith in Jesus Christ. Circumcision is only a sign; it's not the real thing. It's an outward reminder of that inward reality of his life. What is a

seal? Well if some of you are gourmet cooks, you buy steak and you want USDA steak. So what you do is you get that steak and top of that steak, on top of that package, there is a seal, a sticker that says USDA. But which one of you would bring that home, take out the seal and start frying it in your pan? You wouldn't because you know it's merely a seal. What is important is what it reflects on the inside, the package. So what is a circumcision? It is a sign, it is seal. That is the parallel for our baptism. Does baptism save you? No! But like circumcision, it is a sign; it is seal to point towards the inward reality I have trusted in Jesus for salvation and life. It's like a wedding ring. Can a wedding ring save you? No, wedding rings don't save you. For me maybe it did - my wife saves me from a lot of errors and mistakes. But does a wedding ring make you married? No! A wedding ring declares you are married but it doesn't make you married. Wearing a ring by itself means nothing unless there is an inward reality. And so circumcision, baptism, they are outward manifestations or signs and seals to attest to an inward reality.

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Just this week one of our SF (spiritual family) members in the States in Pittsburgh wrote back and gave us a testimony of a friend. It was a long testimony. I won't read everything to you but I just want to read the opening statements and this is it. He says, "The hardest thing for me personally in becoming a Christian was the need to first admit I wasn't a Christian. I had been taught that you become a Christian when you are baptised as an infant." Do you know that there are countless people around the world today who think that circumcision saves, baptism saves? But if only they go to the Scriptures and think of that patriarch, that father of faith Abraham. He was saved when he was uncircumcised. It doesn't save. So let me ask you in a kind of a wrap, not that it's the end of the sermon but a kind of a junctional wrap up. How was Abraham justified? He was justified by faith in... you all must be specific. He was justified by faith in God, faith in the coming Saviour. I think it's as specific as that. When was Abraham circumcised? At least 14 years after he was saved. And why was he circumcised? It is sign and seal to attest to that salvation he had. Let me ask you today. How are you saved? You are saved by faith in the Saviour who has already come. And when should you be baptised? Now not 14 years after you are saved. That's where it doesn't parallel so well. But you are to be baptised after you are saved and not before because it doesn't help. It's like putting on a wedding ring when you are a five-year old, it doesn't mean anything. And what is the importance or significance of baptism? It is a sign, it is a seal. So that is the argument put forth by apostle Paul. It's logical, it's scriptural. He goes on to say, (Romans 4:11) as a result of this Abraham might be the father of all them that believed though they be not

circumcised. So Abraham is the father of faith to all of us today who are uncircumcised. Doesn't matter because he was saved when he was yet uncircumcised. Not only to the uncircumcised they see the father of faith, but verse 12 also tells us he is also the father of those who are circumcised because he was circumcised after he was saved. But there's a qualifier here when Paul says, "to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham." So what Paul is saying is this Abraham is the father of the uncircumcised who placed their faith in Jesus. Abraham is also the father of faith of the circumcised who placed their faith in Jesus. He is the father of the circumcised only in as much as they also believed in Jesus because the key thing is the faith. It is not the circumcision. Didn't Paul say in Romans 9 they are not all Israel who are of Israel. There are many Israelites but are they truly Jews, are they truly of Israel? You see, he is the father of the circumcised only in as much as they also have the same faith in the Saviour. So this is the argument of Paul – nobody is saved by circumcision because Abraham was not saved by circumcision as well. He was saved by faith.

00:36:33

Now what about the law? The Jews also had that hang-up over the law – we are saved because we have the law. Now, through Abraham's example, Paul is also going to, like angry bird, shatter that wrong teaching. I've been playing angry bird so a lot of angry birds things coming out. And Paul is going to shatter that erroneous thinking that the law could save because Abraham was not saved by obedience to the law. Why, you say, pastor. Look at verse 13 (Romans 4:13) "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law.." It was not through the law. Abraham was saved without and apart from the law but through the righteousness of faith. You say why? Verse 14 (Romans 4:14) "For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect." Now let me ask you a question. When Abraham was justified by faith in Genesis 15, was the law given? Was it given? No. When was the law given? Exodus chapter 20. From Genesis 15 to Exodus chapter 20, how long is that? 8 years? Wow! Circumcision 14 years. No the law further lah. Moses and Abraham quite far away, quite far away. Quite far away. Those who get it right, lunch on me. It's okay I belanja (treat) three dollars. Anyone? (audience 430 years) aiyah you got it. All right Chloe, I owe you lunch. I'll buy you lunch later on. She is absolutely right. How do you know that? (Chloe: Galatians 3:17) Excellent! Give her around of applause. Gladly will I spend and be spent for you because you do know the Scriptures. Galatians 3:17 says "And this I say.." Eh, you sure you didn't check my slides before? "And this I say, that

the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ.." This is talking about the relationship between God and Abraham. It "...was confirmed before..." Before what? Before "...the law" of God in Christ because and to thy seed. The law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. You see, what happened is on the night of Genesis chapter 15, God made a promise to Abraham. Confirmed it. By the way, is it confirmed? I say double confirmed. I'm not cheeky here because Hebrews 6:18 tells us that He promised and He swore with an oath that by two immutable things that this is established. It's a double confirmed. I think Hossan Leong (local comedian) got it from Hebrews 6:18. It is sure, and it was given by promise. And so what God had with Abraham in Genesis 15 is established. And the law being given 430 years later cannot change that because God will not change, God will not be unfaithful to His promise and to His oath. So, is the law necessary for salvation? No! Just think of our father Abraham. It cannot disannul forceful, logic and argument. Not only is this chronologically argued but practically it is also true, isn't it. Because in verse 15, "...the law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." What Paul is saying here is that there is no way any man could be saved because he meets the standards of the law. In fact when you know the law all it does is it works up wrath. Wrath from God and also frustration from man. If I were to say to you the only people who can get saved of people who can stand here jump up and touch the ceiling... Now okay that's not fair because people like Yao Ming may be able to do so... But let's say you able to touch something really high and you try and you try and you try. There's no way, no chance in a million anyone could touch that high standard. That's what the law does to you except that it's far more difficult. No man, no man could follow, obey the law completely and consistently. That's why no man can be saved by the law. Galatians 3 tells us, (Galatians 3:10,11) "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse..." By the way, if you think you can be saved by the law you are cursed. "...for it is written. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith." No way, no way because James equally tells us (James 2:10) "...whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So, is law necessary for salvation? Well, look at the life of Abraham (he was saved before the law was given), it is not. And moreover, there is no way any man could 100 percent, satisfactorily, fulfil the demands of the law. So here it is. What's the purpose of the law? The law is given so that we may know that we are sinners. That's it. The law is like a thermal scanner. You remember the ...not H1N1...SARS. Remember the SARS time? You walk through thermal scanners? All thermal scanners do is to tell you are, you have a high temperature, you

have breached the normal range. But the thermal scanner could never heal you. You can put the thermal scanner in your bed, you can sleep with it but it will never cure you. The law is like a thermal scanner that shows up your disease but it could never cure you of your disease. That's what the law is for.

00:43:29

So let's come to the concluding verse. Is a man saved by circumcision? Absolutely not! Just think about Abraham – 14 year gap. Is a man saved by the law? Absolutely not! Think about the 430 year gap and think about the great gulf between our ability and God's demands. So how is a man saved? Not of circumcision, not of law but the Bible says by grace. (Romans 4:16) "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace." Throughout the history of mankind there is only one way whereby man may be saved and it is by grace. The word grace is the word Charis in the Greek which means a gift. It refers to something that is undeserved, something you don't merit, something you did not earn, something that is simply given to you. God saves us not because there is anything good in us. God saves us not because we can do anything for God. But God saves us purely out of His grace, Charis. Salvation is not because there is anything good in me. Salvation is about everything that is good in God. That's His grace, that's His Charis, that's His gift. Not of circumcision, not of works of the law but of grace. Abraham, why should God save him? Idolatrous man living in an idolatrous land. Not circumcised yet, not a man who fulfils the law but it is God's grace that reached out to Abraham and he was saved. How can a man receive this grace? How can anyone of us today receive the Charis, the gift of God? Scripture tells us (Romans 4:16) "Therefore it is of faith." Faith is that arm that reaches out to the gift of God. We need to receive that gift through faith.

We have been poring through the book of Romans and I know it has created all kinds of responses in all kinds of people here. One response that I was particularly glad with is that men and women in this church have been stirred to think about their own salvation. And they've been considering, pastor am I really saved? I'm glad for that not that I like controversy. But I think it is needful for people who, actually most of us, who might have grown up in a Christian family to really consider for ourselves is there a genuine faith in Jesus Christ in my life. I mean... I hope none of you think you are a Christian simply because you're born into a Christian family or because you fulfilled the rituals of Christianity all your life but that you have genuine faith in Christ. And I have been most glad to listen, to hear, and hopefully help them according to the Word. That's what Romans does – it causes you to examine your faith, examine yourself and see if ye be in the faith. And I find one aspect vital to the

understanding of that conundrum or that difficulty and that is this: God saves us by His grace but that we must receive that grace by faith and not just any kind of a faith because subsequently He says it is like the faith of Abraham. I think Abraham's faith obviously is a genuine faith. But you think about it - the Bible does speak also about false faith, isn't it.

00:47:39

This morning with the remaining time I want to bless your heart because it is so vital for us to realise that salvation is not by circumcision, it's not by law, but by grace and we can only access that grace of faith. You need to know what genuine faith is, you need to know what the real key is. Use a fake key it will never open. So let's understand false versus real faith. I hope it'll bless your heart.

False faith

What is false faith? Does the Bible teach false faith? In other words, a kind of belief that does not really result in true salvation. Is there? I think so. Look at Scripture and what it says. John 2:23 the Bible says, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name..." Wow, you say that's great many believed, so many disciples, many true believers. Well, the Bible continues to say, "...when they saw the miracles which He did. (John 2:24) But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men." He saw their hearts. There was a kind of belief in a sense they were stirred up to follow Him because He did so many miracles but it was not a true belief that resulted in authentic life change and committed discipleship with Jesus Christ. Jesus saw through their false faith. And then again in Acts 26:27 and 28, "King Agrippa" (this is Paul speaking) "believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." You do believe to a certain extent, to a certain degree, to certain way. "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." One of the saddest statements of the Bible. I've learned so much, I've heard so much and I know so much but yet I will not be a Christian. I am almost a Christian but I'm not one. Do you believe in the prophets? Yes I do, somewhat, but this is not genuine faith that results in genuine salvation and a relationship with God. Maybe the most obvious passage we know of is James chapter 2 and verses 17 and also verse 19. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." Genuine faith is not a faith that is alone. I'll explain that in a while but there is that reference to a false faith, a faith that does not save. The devils also believe and tremble but they are not saved. So they have a kind of a belief but not the genuine kind of life-saving belief. So these are examples of false faith.

00:50:53

Real faith!

But let us consider real faith. What is real faith? Maybe you can check your own life today. What is real faith? As in customary I always like to have three letters of the alphabet similar. It helps me, I hope it helps you.

1. Repentance

I think the characteristics of real faith number one is that it will be with the element of repentance. True faith must be coupled with repentance. The word repentance means a change of mind. In particular, a change of mind with regards to our sins. You see, there are many people today who say they believe in Jesus Christ but they believe in Jesus Christ only as to save them from their sicknesses or their poverty or their business failures. But Jesus came to save us from our sins and until there is a genuine change of mind with regards to our sins, there is not to be said a genuine faith. See Jesus himself said in Mark 1:15, "And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Two sides of the same coin – repentance, faith. In Acts 20:21, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." True faith has the element of genuine repentance.

2. Results

Not only should there be repentance, there will be results. There will be results. Now please be clear about this is – we're all saved by faith alone but genuine faith is not faith that is alone. Genuine faith will result in fruit, it effects in change. James (James 2:17) says there's a kind of faith that is dead and that kind of dead faith, false faith is alone. But genuine faith on the other hand produces works. Abraham is a great example at this point. James 2:21-23. Interesting early in the morning there was a brethren that says Pastor I remember your message last Sunday but there is a question that that keeps niggling I have a niggling question that bugs me and that is James 2:21. We know that Romans tells us that Abraham was justified by faith without the works of the law. Then why is James saying, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works.." Is there a contradiction? Is Paul and James enemies and they can't see eye to eye? No, they see eye to eye. It's just that they are referring to different perspectives of the same thing. Abraham is justified by faith. It's clear Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. But if you read the context of James chapter 2, James is saying hey you can show me your faith

without your works and I will show you my faith by my works. It's about being seen as the man of God, the believer of God, by your works. How do we know Abraham was a man of faith? Well, he is seen, he is justified by his works before us. He had genuine faith and his genuine faith is evidenced when he offered his Isaac, his son, upon the altar. Genuine faith results in change.

I ask you today, has there been change in your life? Ya, we all know that salvation is by faith alone and it is not by the works you do. But do you realise that genuine faith is not alone? Genuine faith produces works. So if you claim that you have trusted in Christ's 10 years ago, 20 years ago and all these years up to today there has not been a single bit of change in your life, now this is not for me to judge nor for others to judge, it's for you to assess. The problem is not that faith doesn't work, the problem is that you were presumptuous in the first place and there was no genuine faith. Because the 10, 20 years, the lack of fruit in your life shows you up or shows the lack of faith up.

Genuine faith, the faith of Abraham, is coupled with repentance, it is manifested in its results and finally there is a strong element of resilience.

3. Resilience

Remember in the Bible there are four kinds of soil spoken of by Jesus in the parable. There was a certain kind of soil that when the seed of the Word falls into it, it brings forth some fruit in the beginning, some semblance of life. But when the sun comes up and when the tribulations arise what happens is that it dies. It's not the right soil – it is shown up to be false soil. And there's only one kind of a faith that saves us – it's a faith that is evidenced by repentance with the results, with the fruit and change, and it is a faith that is resilient just like that of father Abraham. I came across this passage this week Hebrews 6 (Hebrews 6:12-15) great passage... "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Abraham's faith is enduring. You can go on to verse 15, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." There is that resilience, that endurance, in genuine faith.

00:57:23

Well, I'm not sure if you have absorbed it all but I hope for those sincere seekers it will be a benefit to you. And for those who may have been presumptuous may the Spirit of God work in your own hearts. So real faith requires these three elements but

let me end by saying therefore it is of faith, it is genuine faith, the faith of Abraham, that allows us to latch onto the grace of God.

We are saved by grace. Do you know something? You're not saved by faith. Can I say this again? You're not saved by faith, you saved by grace. You say Pastor what's the difference. Well let me illustrate. Suppose you on the 20th storey in a HDB flat and there is a fire raging in your flat and there's no way out except through the window. And down there there's that group of firemen with that canvas catch all and they shout to you, "Jump, jump, jump." You say, "No, no, no." But you look around there is no other way and if they say, "Jump, jump, jump" and finally you say, "All right I decide to take a leap of faith." You jump off the window ledge and you land onto the canvas catch all safe and secure. Would you walk out of the canvas catch all and then say to the firemen, "Hey my faith has saved me." Would you say that? No! What would you say? Thank you for saving me. It was the firemen who saved you but it was faith that allowed you to be saved.

What saves us? Is it our faith? It's grace. It's grace. It's grace that saves us but it is the faith in Him that accesses that grace of God toward us. Why is this important you say. The importance is this – so that no man can glory, so that no man can boast I am saved because I have great faith. No friends, you are saved because of God's great grace. Wherefore is there any boasting – none. You see, the proper understanding of the Gospel results in ultimate glory given to God alone. There is no glory in man in God's plan of salvation. Not circumcision, not the law, not your works, not even your faith – it is the grace of God, saved by grace alone.

God's Salvation

We are all Protestants if you have believed in Jesus Christ alone for salvation in life and the message of the Protestants, the Reformation, the message of God's salvation is true still today.

Man is not saved by traditions of man but we are saved because of what the Word of God alone says - Sola Scriptura.

We are saved not because of the law or because of our works but by grace alone - Sola Gratia.

We are saved because of faith alone in Jesus Christ – Sola Fide, Solus Christus.

And what it all culminates is Soli deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory. May your salvation manifest the glory of God.

01:01:10

Let's bow for a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for the writings that You have preserved for us that we may have a sure foundation with regards to the most important message of life. Thank you You saved us of Your grace and not because of anything we have done that the promise might be sure toward us. And we thank You that we are saved by grace alone because it means all glory to God alone. Father, would you through Your Word build up our foundations, would you through Your Word cause us to glory in you. Would You through Your Word this morning bring those who are still outside the Kingdom and bring them into that saving grace? Would you awaken those who are in slumber of presumption and warned them, and stir within them, that they would not mindlessly slipped into the pits of the fiery hell. Father, would you have mercy to so do Your work in our lives. We pray, Spirit of God, that though the voice of Man has ceased He will continue to speak to each and everyone of us. We thank you. We thank you for the glorious Gospel message. We ask and pray all this in Jesus name. Amen. God bless.