

Parson to Person

ROMANS 3 PART 4 with ROMANS 4 PART 1

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:27–31 NKJV).

“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. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin’ ” (Romans 4:1–8 NKJV).

It is clear that God has declared all men sinners—*“for all have sinned”* (Romans 3:23). This declaration reminds us that no man (or woman) is made (or can be made) righteous by keeping the Law given to Moses, by any religious activity, by any measure of good works or human action, or by good intentions—as if from a pure heart. *“There are none righteous, no not one”* (Romans 3:10). Moreover, “If God did not condemn all men, He would leave some feeling that they may be righteous enough (in and of themselves) to merit the favor of God. This would leave man with one of two problems: a false hope of salvation based upon human merit, or a lifetime of insecurity concerning the measure of their righteousness and/or lack thereof.” The two options are cruel and punishing.

If men were able perform their way into the favor of God there would be a level of human merit worth boasting. However, God leaves men with no room or reason to boast.

This being said, God has in His great mercy provided mankind with a righteousness granted by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus, the Messiah. This is the grace Paul teaches and the grace we receive.

Of continued interest is the definitions of grace we all fall short of explaining. Grace has been said to be “unmerited favor.” That definition is good. However, a fuller explanation can be helpful.

In the Christian expression, grace is embodied in the Godhead and manifested in Jesus Himself. Grace is the power of God which enables men to believe, to live, and to love. Grace is the unmerited favor of God granting forgiveness of sins (redemption and justification), the granting of divine selection (election), separation from this fallen world (sanctification), and exaltation to the heavenly places in Christ (glorification). Grace cannot be earned or it is no longer unmerited, nor can the recipient be indebted to God for it, or it would then be merited in reparation. Grace cannot be diminished. It is the all-encompassing manifestation of God and His work. Likewise, it cannot be enhanced as that would indicate some deficit in grace itself.

If grace was capable of or in any way in need of enhancement, we would be forced to conclude that God has need and that His work was, may be, or is imperfect. Thus, any human act designed to merit grace, maintain grace, or enhance grace is an assault on both the person and work of God. Therefore, seeking meritorious favor is to blaspheme God Himself.

Men have, for centuries, struggled with the true definition and glory of Grace. May we be among those who no longer struggle or strive—but only receive.

I love you all, Pastor Paul