

Romans 6 - To Him that Worketh Not

We have been studying the great principles of the Gospel and its implications. So far, we have majored on the guilt that the Law brings. We have looked at the reason why everyone needs the Gospel from those who have never been exposed to the Law, those who demonstrate that they know better by the society they keep, and those who absolutely know better because they received the Law directly from God.

1. The pain of the Law -

We conclude from Scripture that everyone is guilty of sin because there is one thing that the Law does, and only one thing, and that is it teaches us what sin is.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

If you look at the last three messages and felt a little guilty, then you were understanding what Paul was getting at in the first three chapters. Actually, if someone does not know that he is going to heaven he should feel very guilty. If you are saved, then you should have relief because you know the perfect remedy for sin. Living in the flesh and being imperfect this side of heaven, there will be failings. It should not surprise the Christian that meditating on the Law stings.

1Cor 15:56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

When I was young and got stung by a bee, we learned to apply a little baking soda mixed with water to neutralize the bee venom. The sting of death requires a lot more. You can't just use a little first aid on the venom that poisoned our soul.

2. False hope -

In Romans 4:1-2, Paul covers the first thing man does to try to compensate for the sting of death. He tries to do some kind of work or penance to pay for his sin.

Rom 4:1-2 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

The problem of sin that we have is spiritual. The works of the flesh are to no avail.

Even when we take the best person there is, they would have to confess that they are a sinner. If someone were self-deceived or dishonest into thinking that they do not sin at all, they would have to say that at some time they have sinned.

1John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

People often wonder about the value of "good" works that people do. Being good must count for something! When it comes to sanctification, which we will look at in a future message, yes. When it comes to salvation, no. The way of the world can sometimes *resemble* what God teaches us to do, but before salvation, all of our works are tainted with sin.

Isa 64:6-7 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

Even in the best of circumstances, a reliance on our tainted goodness to

appease God would be nothing more than to try to use filthy rags to cover the fact that we are sinners.

Like Abraham could have done, someone might try to *claim* boasting rights here on earth, but the righteousness that comes from a sinner means nothing to God.

3. Real hope -

One of the saddest things to see is a child who thinks they have to earn someone's love. And yet that is what some people think when they approach God. If someone's affections have to be earned, then it isn't love. Love loves unreservedly without having to be entreated. You can't buy love, it has to be freely given. That is the way God loves us. That is what is reflected in the next verses.

Rom 4:3-4 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

God expressed His love for Abraham by promising him a seed, Who would turn out to be his great descendant Jesus Christ. We learn elsewhere from the Scriptures that Abraham had the understanding that this would be a special Seed who would be the Author of the resurrection. It was as though God said, "I love you. I am going to provide the Savior seed. I first promised that Seed to Eve back in the garden after the fall and now I am promising Him to you." Abraham's response was effectively, "I believe you." He put his trust in what the Lord was going to provide.

And then, Paul explains in vs. 4, that this love was not the payment for how much he had worked to earn God's love. God's love was given to him graciously. That is what grace is. His love was undeserved because love cannot be bought or bartered. It is just given, and

Abraham believed it.

False hope is based on some notion that we can somehow earn God's love. Real hope is based on the goodness and holiness of God. In His holiness, God does not dwell in two worlds where one day He loves us and the next He loves us not. He is separated unto goodness. Because He is good, His love is real. This is one reason why the Scripture says that the reward of faith is reckoned. There is a logic to it. God is good so it is perfectly rational that He is compelled by His character and nature to love us.

In verse 5, Paul affirms God's goodness to us.

Rom 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Who is the ungodly? That would be us! He did not love us because we were *godly*, but in spite of the fact that we were *ungodly*. To him that worketh not is us. The one who justifies us is God. What God does is to justify us, or make us righteous. The reason why is because we had faith which he *counted* for righteousness. *Counted* is used later and translated imputed, to put to one's charge. To impute means to attribute (in this case, the righteousness of Christ) to a person vicariously; ascribe a quality or a judgement as derived from another. God's reckoning, or logic, was, "If you believe then I will impute Christ's righteousness to you."

In trying to avoid the exclusivity of Christianity, the world tries to suggest that if someone falls short of placing their faith in God as defined in the Bible, they will be accepted if they meet some lesser standard – they have to be at least *sincere* in their belief, even though they are wrong. This only *seems* acceptable if the thing someone believes in is not so repugnant. For example, if someone believes in some half-benign deity such as the peaceful Hindu Vishnu as opposed to the bloody Kali. But, what if someone *sincerely* believes in cannibalism? The standard for sincerity becomes

subjective. In the end, it leads only to the shaky foundation of opinion where self becomes the judge.

People consumed with materialism naturally look to success as a standard for righteousness, as in, "You can't argue with success!" This is just another form of works for salvation. The lure of comfort in this world offers a poor and bankrupt substitute that can only be achieved by placing our faith in the only One who can guarantee salvation.

When man comes up with his schemes for salvation, that salvation is only as good as man can back it up. You can only have as much salvation as you can guarantee.

God's guarantee is as good as His infinite power, His infinite love, His infinite righteousness, and His infinite grace.

To be sure, this righteousness has nothing to do with the Law.

Rom 4:9-10 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision **[the Jews who were given the Law]** *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

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

Paul points out that the Torah, the Law, had not even been given yet. Abraham had imputed righteousness before circumcision had been commanded at all. That is why that same faith and righteousness is available to all.

Why do we go through such a detailed explanation? So it can be seen how *absolute* God's promise of salvation is.

4. Real Joy -

So many go through life living for one fleeting moment of joy after another. For the Christian, the real joy comes

from knowing we have the victory, and that the victory we are looking for comes at the end.

Critics are incredulous about that kind of joy. They scoff at the idea of a joy the joy that comes only at the end of a life of struggle as if living in constant pleasure were something worthwhile. It has been demonstrated that the greater degree of a life of pleasure, the greater the envy and lack of joy people have. It is really hard to sympathize with those who think it all struggle is bad. Tell that to the football player, the beachgoer, the parent, the artist, and anyone doing practically anything worthwhile who *submits themselves* to the struggle, willingly, for the joy at the end. Even in day to day life so many things worth having only come with struggle.

Rom 8:35-37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church. The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the

bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us." The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

– Unknown.

We live the victory now. Ring the Bells! The resurrection is accomplished already. That resurrection power is active in our lives now.

That victory, though, is useless if someone does not claim it.

Lord Kenneth Clark, internationally known for his television series, *Civilization*, lived and died without faith in Jesus Christ. He admitted in his autobiography that while visiting a beautiful church, he had what he believed to be an overwhelming religious experience. "My whole being," Clark wrote, "was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy far more intense than anything I had known before." But the "gloom of grace," as he described it, created a problem. If he allowed himself to be influenced by it, he knew he would have to change. His family might think he had lost his mind. Maybe that intense joy would prove to be an illusion. So he concluded, "I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course."

– Our Daily Bread

If you are saved, are you living the victory, or are you clinging to the old dead life? Are you pursuing the things that cannot bring true joy? If you have not turned your life over to Christ in exchange for forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life, will you miss it because

you want to cling to the things that can only bring a joy that will fade and then ultimately fail you in eternity? Your decision will determine whether Jesus will be your Savior or your judge.

Good works take on a whole new meaning. Now we do them out of gratitude.

1. The pain of the Law - Rom 3:20, 1Cor 15:56,
2. False hope - Rom 4:1-2, 1John 1:10, Isa 64:6-7
3. Real hope - Rom 4:3-4, Rom 4:5, Rom 4:9-10
4. Real Joy - Rom 8:35-37