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Living Hope EFC

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Salvation by Grace means abandoning every human means of achieving our own Righteousness:

Rom.4:9-17

ILLUS: Francis Schaeffer (*The Finished Work of Christ*, 97-98)

"When we lived in Switzerland, one of my daughters, in an effort to be magnanimous, gathered up the village children and went to the grocery store, where we had an account. *She bought lots of candy & with great care distributed it to all the children.* Word of this got around, and each day more and more kids went with her to the store to get candy. Then one day the storekeeper suddenly got worried. He thought this looked a little strange, to have half the village children in a little parade after our child, coming to his store to get candy. So, he called us and said, 'Do you know what your daughter is doing?' And of course we were totally surprised by his report of her generous deeds!

So what was the storekeeper to do? He was stuck. He realized he probably shouldn't have let her take all the candy. But what could he do? *He could have demanded that our daughter pay him.* After all, she was the one who owed the money. Of course, this would have been impossible. The amount she owed was way beyond her ability to pay,

So how was the situation resolved? Well, we said, 'Put it on our account.' The total bill would have been a tremendous amount to our child, and she couldn't have paid it. On our account, it didn't make much difference...We could have said to the storekeeper, '**Impute her debt to us.**' That's exactly...what imputation means.

And this is exactly what Paul has been teaching us in Romans 3 & 4 as God's way of transferring the debt of our sin to Christ, & His r'ness to us.

- We have sinned...we could never pay the debt for our sin. (3:9-20)
- But Christ can pay, does pay, & says, '**All right, put this on My account.**' ***When we accept Christ as Savior all our sin is put on His account.*** **And His righteousness is put on our account! Rom.4:4-7.**
- **This procedure, "imputation/ reckoning/ crediting to our account," is the ingenious wisdom of God wherein He makes the sinner righteous and remains righteous Himself. The key word is "**logizomai.**" "**To credit to one's account.**"**

(1) Meaning: It is an accounting/ bookkeeping term – meaning to "enter it into the account book."

- It is used 41 times in the NT, 19 times in Romans, *11 times in Rom.4.*
- KJV = Count, reckon, impute. NIV = "credit, credited."

(2) Its significance: God actually credits to our spiritual account divinely valued righteousness when we trust what He says about Jesus Christ.

- **Rom.3:28** "maintain." **4:3,4,5,6,8 "count". = 5:1**
- **2 Cor.5:21** – Here is a key verse explaining this concept.

- Our sins were credited to Christ, though He was righteous.
- His righteousness is credited to us, though we are sinners.
- As really as He bore our sins, we now have His righteousness.
- Man has sin and he is never treated (credited) as having it.
- Man has no righteousness of his own and is treated as righteous.

Waterhouse: "It is Christ's righteousness (not human righteousness & merit) that is the basis of a believer's acceptance and standing with God. Self-righteousness did not save in the first place, and it is not a basis upon which salvation is continued. Christ's righteousness brings salvation. So the real issue in a believer's security is not the endurance of human righteousness but the **eternal nature** of Christ's **righteousness**. "A believer cannot lose his righteousness or righteous legal standing before God unless Christ loses His righteousness, and that cannot and will not occur. His righteousness is eternal" – 191, *Not by Bread Alone*

Paul is dismantling every notion that salvation can be attained on any human basis of "credit," apart from grace alone.

1 – God makes men righteous exactly opposite our natural thinking 4:5.

- We naturally think that God wants "*good people*" to go to heaven. The better we are the better our chances. Every now & then God reaches down and saves a *real* sinner, but He desires good people.
- Rom.4:5 "God justifies the **UNGODLY**." - 1:18, 3:10,23.
- God does love *goodness*, but all people are *ungodly*.

POINT: *No one can go to heaven – unless he first confesses he is ungodly and in need of a Savior, then places his faith in Jesus Christ.*

- God does **not** justify the one who: decides he is tired of being ungodly, tries to shape up his own life, tries to do better, is wealthy, politically correct, talented or religious. Only the "ungodly" believer.

ILLUS: Avis Rent a Car

- Avis used to have a TV add with their slogan: "We try harder."
- There will be no one in heaven on the basis of "trying harder."

Grace does not take into account what a man has to offer, only what God has to give! And that is why a person's merit or demerit never intimidate or threaten grace.

2 – Grace is not dispensed on the basis of divine ordinance: 4:9-12

Paul now addresses perhaps the final argument to be given up by the Jew, as to how & why Jews are accepted by God as His Cov't people.

4:9 – Does a person have to be circumcised to belong to God?

- There were many Jews who taught this in Paul's day.
- It **was** a divine ordinance – and this complicates the question.
- **Gen.17:9-14.** *An everlasting covenant!*
- Ex.12:44,48 – An alien could not eat the Passover if uncircumcised.

- Jews believed circumcision placed a man in cov't relationship with God. An Israelite who practiced idolatry had to have his circumcision removed before he could enter hell. (Book of Jubilees)
- Abraham sits at the gate of hell & doesn't all any cir/ed to enter.
POINT: No surgery = no heaven! (Can this really be true?)

How does Paul answer this? 4:10-12.

(1) What seems to be a complicated doctrinal debate is cleared up by a simple history lesson.

- Abraham is declared righteous in Gen.15:6.
- He is circumcised in Gen.17:24 – some 15 years later!

CONCLUSION: Abraham, the one man in all Scripture clearly declared righteous, was made righteous *without* circumcision.

Newell (138): "Paul has turned the Jew's boast upside down. It is not the Gentile who must come to the Jew's cir/ for salvation; it is the Jew who must come to the Gentile faith, such faith as Abr had long before cir/."

The beauty & significance of this is that Abraham is the father of Jew and Gentile alike – who have faith in Christ. **One New Family** is created by faith in Abraham's descendant the Messiah.

- **Eph.2:14-22.** The Church is a new creation of God, built upon Christ.
- Paul makes the point – it is not a religious rite or ritual that justifies even the Jew. **A Jew is only related to God by faith –v.12.**

Q: Does a Jew get into heaven today because he is a Jew, one of God's chosen people? Or must he accept Christ as his Savior? He must!

(2) Circumcision was only symbolic of a heart relationship with God.

- **Rom.2:28-29;** Deut.10:16; Jer.9:24,26. Acts 10:28; Gal.5:1-6.

APPLICATION for us?

What **divine ordinances** have been given to the church, which are often given the value of dispensing grace, forgiveness, salvation to believers?

Answer: *Communion and Baptism.*

- Ordinances are fine until **merit** begins being attached to them.
- This was what eventually distinguished R.C. from Catholic Church.

1- Communion. Roman Catholicism Council of Trent (1545-63):

- The official unalterable position of the church. Canons 2,5,6.
- States that the whole substance of the bread is converted into the body & the whole substance of the wine is converted into the blood.
- "If any one saith, either that the principal fruit of the most holy Eucharist is NOT the remission of sins, or that other effects do not result therefrom: let him be anathema." – Canon V.

BUT: This was not the meaning in the early church, nor in the church after the Reformation.

- **Luther** - It is for Christians, not for forgiveness, but thanks for forgiveness. **Christ is not re-sacrificed for removing sins. Heb.9:24-28**
- **Calvin** – The sacraments were simply **symbols**...confirmation of faith.

2 – Baptism. (MacArthur, 157) – *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by **Ludwig Ott**: “Baptism confers the grace of justification.”

- Quoting from the *Council of Trent*: “If anyone denies that by the grace of our LJC, which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted or even asserts that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away...let him be anathema.”
- “We descend into the water full of sins and filth and we arise from it bearing fruit as we have in our heart the fear of God and in our spirit hope in Jesus...According to the testimony of Holy Spirit, baptism has the power both of eradication of sin and of effecting inner sanctification. Baptism by water is...necessary for all men without exception, for salvation.”

The Early Church (3rd C.)

Believers waited 3 years after conversation to be baptized – at Easter.

Mormons: Get baptized for the dead

One lady made over 30,000 trips to Salt Lake City to be baptized for the dead. A Mormon elder commented: I believe this lady in the day of judgment, through being baptized for the dead, has save more souls than Jesus.” – Lee Tan 1542

Q: - If salvation is by grace, through faith – must a person DO something else to go to heaven? Be circumcised? Baptized? Take communion?

- ***If circumcision gives no merit to Jews, do we think baptism does?***
- **1 Cor.1:14-17; 12:13. Rom.6:1-6. 1 Pet.3:18-21. Titus 3:5.**
- In Regeneration = Christ is formed IN us by the H.S.
- By the baptism of the H.S. = we are baptized into the body of Christ & placed into the accomplishments of Christ.
- Christ is our complete righteousness, by faith. –1 Cor.1:30
- ***What can possibly be added by any ordinance?***

APPLY: While wandering in the desert – both Abraham and David discovered righteousness by faith! (4:1-8)

- It is in the Temple that the Religious Leaders learned to trust in rituals
- **It seems the particular danger of organized religion – to fall into the practice of putting faith in rituals, and lose faith in Christ’s work.**

3 – Grace operates on the basis of what God does for man, not what man does for God:
4:13-17.

POINTS:

(1) God did not make Abraham such extravagant promises based upon what Abraham could or would do. He did it on the basis of relationship.

- God's promises far exceed any works or abilities of Abraham.
- Abraham could only believe God's word. It is the same with us!

(2) Vs.14 – If personal goodness (law-keeping) is the basis for being heir, then the promise really meant nothing, nor does faith – only works.

- BUT no man can boast of earning blessing from God on the basis of works – **4:2-5. Vs.15-** Law brings wrath because all break Law.

(3) V.16 – God places the full weight of guaranteeing an eternal inheritance (promise) upon Himself, His ability, not ours.

- God makes His promises upon that which He can guarantee.
- What He can guarantee – is that He judged our sin in Christ & sin is not counted against the ungodly that believes.
- Righteousness is counted for the believer.
- **V.17!** Nothing is impossible with God.
- God has no limitations – for keeping promises He makes.
- He will not make a promise that He will not keep!

APPLICATION:

1- The Gospel is universal, available to all, Jew & Gentile alike.

It is also highly exclusive, in that only those who believe God are saved.

It is as wide as the world, but as narrow as those who truly believe in the finished work of Christ.

2- The Bible makes it very clear that the Christian will never stand in judgment before God concerning the legal aspect of their sin. All was legally dealt with and judged on the Cross, on Christ.