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The Roman Road: Making Himself Known

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Romans 4:1-8,23,25 (ESV)

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather 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 counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone...who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)

"The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

I want to talk to you today about God making himself known in his grace, making himself known to us. As Paul is writing to the believers in Rome, he's talking about our separation from God through our sinfulness, and he moves towards our reconciliation with God. He starts to go back to the person of Abraham, and he uses Abraham as an example for how we

attain a greater knowledge of God. I want to just highlight a few things for you today about Abraham. Three important things to know about the father of many nations, this chosen man by God.

The first thing I want you to see is that through Abraham, God was beginning to make himself known, his goodness more fully to us as human beings. He was working through this man to start to reveal more to us about himself. We see in Romans 1:20, this letter that we're studying, that since the creation of the world, God has made himself known in creation. His invisible qualities, his eternal power, and his divine nature are clearly seen and understood from what has been made, so that human beings are without excuse. Paul writes that, but that doesn't tell us everything about God. It definitely displays what his invisible nature is like, his eternal powers, like his divine nature. But we need to know more. And God came to the person of Abraham to start to reveal more about himself to us. We see it in Genesis chapter 12 when God picks Abraham, Abraham out.

He hasn't changed his name to Abraham yet. The Lord said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your people and your father's house, to a land that I will show you, and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you. And I'll make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and those who dishonor you. I will curse. And in you this he says to Abraham, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God is going to show us his goodness, his blessing, more of his divine nature through Abraham. Up to this point, he had worked in different people's lives. But now God is calling a people to himself, a nation to himself, for him to display his goodness in, and that goodness should flow through this nation to the entire world. We see this in the scriptures as we look back and Paul refers to Abraham. We need to understand that God is displaying more about himself, making more of himself known to you and me by selecting this person, this man, to be the father of his people, his nation down through history.

Secondly, through Abraham's lineage, God was going to eventually entrust us, anyone who's open to it with his oracles, his teachings, the ways of God and His way of salvation. So in Abraham, I want you to understand this.

God is working to display himself more than he has in creation to us as people. He's displaying his goodness, his blessing, his desire to care for us through Abraham. And then he is also through Abraham giving us his ways, his teachings, his oracles. Paul wrote about this in Romans chapter three when he said, "Abraham's descendants." Now this is the Jewish people.

They were entrusted with the very oracles, the words of God. This is God's teaching, his ways. He didn't have to do this for us. This is the start of it. The laws would come into Abraham's lineage through Moses and the Ten Commandments and all the way through the Old Testament. God teaches us about himself and about this world more specifically through the teachings that he gave to Abraham's family, his people, the Jewish people. And of course, these teachings would come through the prophets in the Old Testament. They'd come through Moses, they'd come through the judges, and in many different individuals. God would inspire his teachings and reveal to us things about himself. And then in Galatians 3:16, the apostle Paul refers back to these promises again that were made to Abraham. And he said, "The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring." It does not say offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one and to your offspring. Now he's speaking specifically not of prophets and priests. The Old Testament and those that were given teachings.

But he's speaking now of the way of salvation that God would make known to us. And when he says, "referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ," the way of salvation. So in Abraham, God is beginning to demonstrate more about himself to us in the world. This is human history, friends. This is our real history in the world. God's work in history, in our world to make himself known to us. And through Abraham's lineage, he teaches us about himself through the prophets, the priests, the kings, the judges, even through those individuals like Moses, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then the way of salvation. Because in the lineage of Abraham everything points to the coming of Christ.

Thirdly, through Abraham, God could clearly help us see that all of this is appropriated, worked in our life, given to us by faith. It is ours to receive by faith. And we see this so clearly in the scriptures. Somehow God has called for you and me to come to faith, to grow in faith, to trust him with our faith. In Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter, they refer back to the individuals before us, and God's Spirit takes us back there. It says, "By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen in holy fear, built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." Noah himself was made right with God through his faith by faith. Hebrews 11:8 says, "Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." What is this faith? Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Even though we can't see God, he calls forth belief in us. He wants us to trust him. He wants us to take him at his word. It's just something he's designed in all of creation of how his salvation works, how we get to know him. We get to know him by faith and not by sight. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without this

faith, it's impossible to please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that he is God and that he'll reward those who seek him." All of this is attained by faith. And so then we get back to Romans 4. So through Abraham, God is teaching us about his goodness, his desire to bless us, and through his lineage. He's teaching us about himself through his teachings, and he's showing us the way of salvation. And then through Abraham's faith, which is referred to so often and even back to Noah's faith, we are taught that all of this is apprehended by faith and not by sight for us. And so Romans 4:23, when he's referring back to Abraham, he says, "The words it was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also."

"It will be counted to us who

believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification to join in the blessing of Abraham, the specific work of God's saving grace in the world." That's the major blessing coming to us through Abraham. The teachings of God, the oracles, the prophets, all that we were taught about God. But then the coming in his lineage of the Messiah, the Christ. To join in this one must come to believe. And here, here's how Paul says it in him, this God who delivered up Jesus for our trespasses and raised him, this Jesus from the dead for our justification. The words, "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours. It will be counted to us who believe we'll be made right with God. If we believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, and believe that he was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Paul said it this way to the believers in Corinth. He said, "This what I received, I passed on to you as a first importance, that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried and that he was raised on the third day."

What really matters in faith, friends, is that you and I come to see who Jesus is and what he was sent here for. For he was delivered up for our trespasses. The truth of the matter is, friends, it's all about Jesus. This entire life, this entire world, all of creation is all about Jesus. I mean, it is so clear in the scriptures. He is the pearl of great price worth selling all you have to get. He is the treasure hidden in a field also worth selling all you and I have to get. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. From him and to him and through him are all things. In him all things hold together. This Christ who came among us. What's happening in the Old Testament, Paul is referring back to it as God is working with us in our sinful state, as we rebelled against God and he cleansed the world through Noah, and then he started to rebuild, allow the world to repopulate. He chose Abram, who would become Abraham, the father of many nations. And

he would start to teach and instruct us in the world. And through all of this you see prophets pointing revelation, pointing to the coming of a messiah, the coming of the Christ. And all of this builds up to when the time had fully come. God sent his son. Born of a virgin.

Friends, we're heading towards Easter. We come through Christmas. Christmas is the arrival of the Christ child. This is where God came among us. And he humbled himself. Was found in human likeness, in appearance, as a man to do for you and I what we couldn't do for ourselves. The wage, the penalty for our sin being death. And he came to be delivered up for our trespasses, our crimes against a holy God. The punishment that would bring you and I peace with God would be put upon him. As we head towards Easter. Friends, we look all through human history and we look back to when the time had fully come. God sending His Son, and he hung upon that cross for you and for me and all those who were before him. They looked forward to his coming, the arrival of Christ from him and to him, and through him are all things. In him all things hold together. This is the great Messiah. And now what does Paul say about God making himself known to us through creation, and then through his teachings and instructions given to us through all the people of God in the Old Testament? And then, of course, through the arrival of his son, the image of the invisible God, and the penalty being paid for our sin. What does Paul say? As God works to make himself known to us, he invites us to get to know him. That's what Paul is getting at here.

As God makes himself known to us, we ought to want to draw near to him. This is what we were made for. Paul says this. He came to understand this in his life, and he was he was religious, and he had a lot of religious behaviors in his life. But as he came to know personally God, he said this Philippians chapter three I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from my behaviors and my obedience to God's ways. But that which comes to me through faith in Christ, a righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ. I want to know his power, his resurrection power. I want to participate in his sufferings. I want to become like him even in his death. Friends, God has made himself known because you and I were created to know him.

I want to ask you today. Do you know him? Are you growing in your understanding of him? Are you drawing closer to him? Do you have some sort of desire to lean towards God as we draw near to him? James said, he will draw near to us. He wants to be our friend. He sent his Son Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin so we could walk with him in peace and in harmony.

If you don't know him, friends, you can open up your heart to him today. And why wouldn't you? This is the very reason you and I were created. In a moment's breath, you can say, God, please forgive me. I understand that you sent your son when the time was right to pay the penalty for my sins so I could be forgiven and be in right relationship with you. Be made righteous before you. Please do this for me, Lord. If you want to do that, would you pray with me right now? Father in heaven. Maybe some are listening who are opening their hearts to you. I pray that you help them confess their failings before you. How they've fallen short, how they're cut off from you and ask for forgiveness. Lord, forgive us for our sins. Thank you for sending your son Jesus, who was delivered up for our trespasses. Thank you for a righteousness then that can come to us by faith in your son, and we can be made right with you, and walk with you and talk with you as a friend. Bring this work into our hearts and help us grow in our understanding of it and our deep fellowship with you, so we could be made more and more glad and joyful in you. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.