

# Not Believing, But Christ Alone

Tim Conway | *illbehonest.com*

How many times do you come across people and they say “Ya I know I need to get back to church.” “Ya I know I don’t read my bible a whole lot, I know I need to do that.” “Yea I know this, I know that, I need to try harder at that.” You see that’s the flesh speaking. That’s what can be done in the flesh.

Well Paul is saying Abraham was justified, but he’s saying it didn’t come that way for if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about but remember, one thing we know for certain the way of salvation that God has designed for mankind leaves no place for you or for me to boast. You know what he’s appealing to you? What he said back in chapter 3 verse 27 “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.” You see he’s saying, “After this way of salvation, what becomes of our boasting?” And he says “There isn’t any! It’s totally excluded.” The way God saves men leaves men no place to boast. What man does in the flesh is all about his boasting, it’s all about what he does.

Remember again, the pharisee, and the tax collector, the pharisee was saying “I fast.” The pharisee was saying “I tithe.” The Pharisee was saying “I’m not an extortioner, I’m not an adulterer, I’m not like that guy.” You know what the flesh does? It boasts. You go door to door, and you say “Are you going to heaven?” “Yea why?” “I go to church.” You see that’s boasting, that’s boasting in something we do. I’ve had people tell me “I’m a deacon.” Wait I didn’t ask you if you were a deacon, I asked you if you were saved. Isn’t that amazing, “Are you going to heaven?” Well I’m a deacon. Does deacon equal heaven? ...Matt and I were talking to one young lady, “Are you going to heaven?” “Well, I sing in the choir.” It’s like damnation is written over their foreheads. That is a damnable answer. Because boasting is excluded. He’s touching back on that. He said “If Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about.”

But boasting is excluded. Well how is it excluded? By what kind of law or on what basis is it excluded? By a basis of works? No! Works always produces boasting. It’s excluded by a law of faith. Now look, if anybody boasts in their faith they’ve immediately turned their faith into a work. Then it’s no good. If you say “well I believe.” You’ve missed it. Because that isn’t the characteristics of true saving faith. True saving faith doesn’t talk that way. Because that isn’t what faith is. Faith isn’t saying “I believe that I believe.” Saving faith isn’t saying “I believe in my faith.” “I trust that I believe.” It’s not looking in the mirror and saying “I have faith.” True saving says “Even my faith is crooked. Lord I believe but help my unbelief.” “Even my faith isn’t right, there’s lots of days where I don’t believe what I should believe.” “My faith is weak, my faith trembles, if it was left to my faith to get to heaven then I’m in trouble.” What faith does is it says “There is the mighty Christ! And I rest there, what He has done!” That’s what it says. That’s what faith says. And you see when it says that it says “Where’s your boast?” My boast is in Jesus Christ alone. My faith is in Christ dying on the cross. My faith is in Christ living a perfect life.

But back to our text. But if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about. But here’s what He says, that “Abraham had nothing to boast about before God.” You know why? Because he wasn’t saved by works. He was saved by faith. And it’s true of every... every true believer, they glory, as Philippians 3:3 says, they glory in Jesus Christ, they put no

confidence in the flesh. No confidence in what they can do. No confidence in their own repentance. Every repentance is imperfect at best. And every faith is imperfect at best. But it's like Charles Leiter said in his book *Justification and Regeneration*. You can have the most pathetic, weak faith. It's like a man who comes to a bridge, that's made of these strong high strength steel girders, and beams and cables, well engineered. This bridge will hold tens of thousands of tons of weight. And you come to it, and you're shaking and trembling and wondering whether it will hold your weight, and no matter whether you're full of all sorts of unbelief and you don't know whether your faith is strong and your repentance and turning from sin it's marginal at best. But if you will step on that bridge, even if your faith is tottering, the bridge will hold you. Why? Because it's ability to hold you has nothing to do with your faith. It has everything to do with the strength that is in it. All your faith does is move you to put your weight on the bridge. The bridge is what holds you. All you need is enough faith to step on it. It can be ever so weak, and the faith does nothing to save you, but join you with that bridge that holds you. That's what it's all about. But what is it you need? Brethren, even here, what I'm trying to tell you is faith is not the most important thing that you need. Faith only attaches you to the most important thing that you need.

Verse 3, "What does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." You see brethren, here's man's most foundational need, when his faith gets him to step on the bridge, immediately where faith moves him to rest there, from the bridge is shot into him a imputed righteousness, a credit goes to him, of righteousness where God declares him just. By faith the man is declared just. Now watch this, "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Verse 4, "Now to the one who works his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due." You see when you go off to work, and you work, and you get paid, that's your due, you've earned it. But it's not by works because those who try to work always fall short of the glory of God. Remember when God comes in fury and judgment He is going to reckon to every man what is due them. You know what your works are due? Wrath. Because even the most righteous thing you've done has been so filled with imperfection that God could never accept it. But when a man seeks to get to heaven by works he's seeking to get there by his wages.

Now you see, when you go to work and you work, if you don't get paid, you can go into the office, you can sit down with your boss, and you can say "You owe me money." That's how works talk, that's how wages and dues talk. "You owe me!" That's boasting right? "I worked for you so many hours, you owe me!" That's boasting because that's saying "I did this. You need to reward me according to what I've done." That's how works talks.

Verse 5, now I want you to get this, Brethren I can remember, as a Christian, the first time I actually saw the truth in Romans 4:5. It about knocked me on my rear end. What you need to see here, Romans 4 and verse 5 is the key that throws open the whole reality to how a man enters heaven. Listen, listen to it. And to the one who does not work, here it is. This is a picture of the man - of every man and every woman who enters heaven. A portrait, Paul is painting us a picture of the man who goes to heaven. Here it is. "And to the one who does not work." He doesn't get into heaven by anything he does. No work. He does not work. You have to understand this, God saves men, but not on the basis of anything. When God saves men, it is absolutely not based on anything they do. Nothing, nothing! Put it all away, put it all aside, you

cannot do anything, He does not save on that basis, to the man who does not work, this is the doorway into heaven. The man who does not work, "You say what man is going to enter heaven?" "To a man who does not work." But trusts Him, he trusts God, who justifies the ungodly. And you need to see that.

Justify means He declares him righteous. On what basis? On the basis of works? No Boasting is excluded because he doesn't enter on works. He trusts the one who justifies the ungodly. "How!?" "How does he declare him righteous?" Not because of any work in him. You know how I know that? Because he's ungodly. Brethren You see if I said to you, "You've gotta repent." And what I meant by that is you gotta clean up your life. You see, the bible does say you've gotta repent. But you know how people miss the reality of repentance? You know what they do? They say "Repentance," and they immediately say "Well the Bible says that's turning from sin."

Listen. Do you know the sin you need to turn from? Trying to get to heaven by your own works. If you say to yourself: Repentance is turning from sin and cleaning up my own life so that God will accept me, it's works. Repentance is when you say "I give up." "Lord, I give up." "Lord I've tried to clean up my life and the more I try to clean..." It's like, you hear it in Paul, Paul said I looked to the Law and the Law said "Don't Covet" and I tried not to covet. I tried to clean it up. I tried not to do it and the more I tried to do it the more I found myself doing it. And Paul said "I died" You see its giving up Its saying... "My greatest need is not good self esteem." "My greatest need is I need to be declared righteous by God." And Jesus Christ earned a righteousness that can become my own righteousness. God in a moment of time can reckon.. He can count.... Look at the end of verse five. Him who justifies the ungodly... To the one who does not work, but trust Him who justifies the ungodly His faith is counted as righteousness.

You see what happens? When he puts his faith in Jesus Christ In all the merits of what Christ did. In a moment God counts the ungodly person righteous. This is the greatest news mankind can ever hear. What it means that someone who is guilty through and through. Somebody who is vile. Somebody that is wicked. Somebody that just like that thief on that cross. Who doesn't have days to live. If penance is needed. If catholics are right. And now you have to do all this penance. And you have to make atonement for your own sins .... What I heard as a little child is that you just have to try and keep the commandments. How? I've broken them my whole life, I'm a thief, I'm on a cross, I'm being crucified, I only have hours to live, I'm a dead man, I don't have time to clean up my life. I need another way of salvation than that. If its by works, I'm in trouble. If I've got to live so many years to undo all the bad that I did And I've got to try..... If my greatest need is all these other things, I'm in trouble. But if my greatest need is a righteousness in the courtrooms of heaven and Jesus Christ has already earned it. All the merit that is needed is already there in Christ. And if I would look and trust in Him that sent His Son to this world to earn this righteousness. And will give it to me in a moment, He'll justify the ungodly, He will declare me righteous in His courtroom. If I look to Him in faith. Not by works.

Brethren, do you see it? It meets man at his deepest need. Man's deepest need is not to figure out how to blame somebody else for his sin. Man's need in all of his ungodliness is not to figure out how he can find a disease called alcoholism or schizophrenia or A.D.D. or anything else. To be an excuse for his sin so that he can feel better about himself and put away guilt feelings. Man's greatest need is that he is guilty and there is a God who is very angry with

him and is going to punish him and has wrath against him and is going to throw him into hell. That's what Jesus said. Jesus said "I'll tell you who to fear." "You fear Him who after He destroys body is able to destroy your soul in hell. And it's Him that does it. You fear Him. That's what Jesus said.

Your greatest need is how to get on right terms with this God. And what Paul says, is what your real problem is is that you have a guilty record in heaven and you need somehow, if it's possible, to have that record wiped clean and to be declared righteous and Paul comes along and says "I have really, really, good news for you. I am not ashamed of the Gospel, I will stand up no matter how it might be ridiculed or mocked." "Whether they stone me or kill me, there is news that I have that this world needs, there is a message that strikes man at his deepest need, and it is in this gospel that the righteousness of God is revealed." And if men will trust Him who has provided a way to remain perfectly just and declare the ungodly just. God can stay just and send you to hell. Or He can be just to put your hell on Jesus' head and have Him make full payment. So that ransom is available for you. And that ransom is paid. And if you will but trust Christ, and see when you put your faith in Christ you don't get the glory, Christ does. Because it says "I believe Jesus has done everything to provide me a righteousness, I believe He earned me a righteousness, I earned wrath and God put my wrath on Him, and He earned righteousness and God credits it to me in a moment by faith."

And so you can be at the end of your life, you can be before the firing squad, you can have lived a guilty life, but if you will, in a moment of time put your faith in Jesus Christ... And you say "That sounds dangerous brother." "That sounds dangerous." "It sounds like you're going to cause somebody to say, 'Well if that's the way salvation is let's just go sin all the more.'" And I'll tell you this, Paul deals with that, Paul tells us many reasons why it's not possible that if you once have that faith why you can't go on and live in sin. But I'll tell you this, even though it's risky, and a lot of people may take this and say, "Hey, I can just sin all I want to."

And you know what? There's lot's of false professors out there, there's lot of people who have made this beautiful gospel into licentiousness, lots of them. The churches are full of them. You got people running around all over the place that say "I believe." And then they want to live in all sorts of sin and Paul's going to deal with them, Paul's already said "People like that, there condemnation is just." When we get to chapter 6, he deals with it. Chapter 7, he deals with it. Chapter 8, he deals with it. But right now, and on into Chapter 5 he wants to set forth a gospel that is so glorious, and so free, and deals with man in his greatest need, and if your sitting out there today and say "That's me, I'm ungodly." Then trust Him who justifies the ungodly. That is the greatest news, those words right there, we have a God who justifies the ungodly. Not that says you need to work, you need to get better, you need to get your act together, you need to go to church more, you need to start tithing, you need to start reading the bible you need to do penance, you need to walk on your knees, you need to go to the celebrations, and go to the mass, and do these things and try to atone for your own sin, and you need to try to work and work and work and work.

And you know what? Every system thats like that on the face of the earth, which by the way is everyone other then true Christianity, they never really know if they've ever done enough because not even their gurus, their teachers, their priests, their prophets, their emons, their monks, none of them know how much you have to do to get it right. Because even the monks

and the priests and the popes have consciences that are accusing, accusing, accusing and even after they've done all their works. It's like Martin Luther, he tried and he tried and he tried, and he confessed and he confessed, and he confessed but his conscience still said "guilty, guilty, guilty!" But when a guilty sinner comes with all of his sins and he says... "Lord, I see in Jesus an answer to all my sins." In a moment he's declared righteous, and his conscience is set free.