

September 11, 2022

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence.

We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.”

The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: “Wisdom from Above”

Room 15/16: Old Testament Characters & Their Relationships)

Room 12: Young Adult Class: Proverbs

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: David Posey

Romans Series: The Power of a Promise

Livestream at 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class @ 5 PM — Praying the Psalms (Auditorium)

High School Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact Dan Stegall at 818-209-9810)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: Wisdom from Above

Room 15/16: Old Testament Characters: Relationships

Room 12: Young Adults Class

Mark Your Calendars: November 13-16, 2022

“How We Got the Bible”

Mike Wilson, Santa Clara church of Christ

See schedule of lessons on page 4

THE DEATHLY DISEASE OF “WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

[Since I'm preaching a "soft" series on Romans – not covering every paragraph during the series – I decided to cover this section of Romans 4 here. – DP]

Romans 4:1-12

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."

Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

I do not recall hearing many sermons on grace when I was younger, nor did I ever attend a class where grace was featured until much later in my life (and I think I taught it). What I heard was constant reference to the importance of *doing* things: attending, giving, worship in spirit and truth, sharing the word... and more. All of those deeds are important.

However, I was left with the distinct impression that doing these things would punch my ticket to heaven. One lady used to compliment Christians who did a good work, saying "you've got another star in your crown." The implication was that we are all accumulating stars and, in my less mature mind at the time, I interpreted that to mean that if I could only get enough stars, my place in heaven would be secure. But that thinking is just as dangerous as the doctrine of "faith only." It sounds like a "works only" doctrine.

Paul addresses this wrong-headed view in Romans 4. It's vital that we understand what "works" are in this chapter. Here, Paul is approaching works from a different angle than, say, James. Here, "works" are acts that someone views as a debt God owes to the one doing them. In other words, the person doing these works would have *earned* God's wage of righteousness (v. 4) through the keeping of God's law.

The problem is, the only possible way a person could qualify for such a wage would be by *perfect performance* of every law God has given. Failure in one point makes him or her a "law-breaker." Galatians 3:10, adds that if a man is to be

justified by works of law he must keep all aspects of the law, *all of the time*. If a man fails to keep even one jot or tittle of the law, he is doomed. God "owes" him nothing. He is, by definition, a sinner and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Paul argues in this chapter that even "our forefather Abraham" was a law-breaker and therefore had "nothing to boast about before God" (v. 4). But Abraham had rock solid faith (ultimately) and that faith was accounted (or credited) to Abraham as righteousness. It is important to understand that *Abraham was just as righteous before God as one who had kept the law perfectly*. This is because Abraham had faith, the kind of faith we must have if we are going to be justified by God.

There is nothing here to imply that Abraham's faith excluded his obedience, as some would argue. Nor does anything said here imply that there were no conditions to be met. David understood conditional justification because in

Psalm 32, partially quoted here, he says that he did not receive this forgiveness *until* (condition) he acknowledged his sins before God. Before he confessed, he was lost and he knew it (see Psalm 32:3-5). Why does Paul bring up circumcision? Circumcision was at the center of controversies in churches in this time. There were Jews who put emphasis

on their "status" as Jews and believed that everyone must become "as a Jew" to be acceptable to God. But the apostles were teaching that *all* were welcome into the kingdom with or without circumcision (Galatians 2:3-5; Philippians 3:2-3; see Acts 15).

Paul argues that Abraham's justification could not possibly be tied to circumcision because the commanded to be circumcised was *give after* Abraham was "counted righteous" because he believed (Genesis 15:6). The sign of circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17, but he had already proven himself faithful prior to that. In fact, the sign of circumcision was given to him *because* of his faithfulness. It is not "status" (i.e., as a Jew; cf. Matthew 3:8-9) but faith which is the deciding factor, and Abraham became the father of all the faithful, whether Jew ("circumcised") or Gentile ("uncircumcised").

Where do works fit in to all of this? One who has faith and trusts God with all his heart will act on God's word, not only believing what it says, but doing God's bidding (see James 2:19ff). Abraham exemplifies the conditional nature of faith. For example, if he had not gone when God told him to go, we would not be reading about him in Romans 4 (see Hebrews 11:8).

The truth is in the tension between the importance of faith and works. We cannot please God without either and we can be seduced into thinking that one of them is not necessary. Neither faith alone nor works alone will get anyone into heaven.

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CULTURE

Cultural issues, trends, warnings

Into the Spooniverse

An online community of young women who live with chronic pain, called “spoonies,” drew attention this week for the ways they post about their illnesses online. #Spoonie has 867 million views on TikTok. Many “spoonies” are people who don’t appear to be physically sick. They take their name from Spoon Theory, a popular metaphor about living with a chronic condition that other people can’t see. Spoonies who post about their symptoms can get a lot of affirmation and attention. In private, some spoonies admit that they would rather have strong symptoms and the clout that comes with those symptoms than actually get better, reports Suzy Weiss for *Common Sense*. Authentic friendship and support groups can be and often are borne out of these types of posts. But parents and caregivers should be aware that these posts can become competitive as spoonies try to showcase their suffering in exaggerated ways. Weiss points out in the article that “they seem to think of their pain as something to be combated—but also nurtured.” She spotlights Morgan Cooper as an example, who found that when she posted pictures of herself looking sad, or holding pills, or in a wheelchair, she would get way more likes than when she posted pictures of herself looking happy and healthy.

When Proverbs 13:20 says, “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm,” it’s saying that we become like the ones we surround ourselves with. To be clear: people with health conditions aren’t fools for seeking support, and we shouldn’t lump them all together. Our point is simply this: if someone’s social approval is linked to their mental or physical illness, how motivated will that person be to actually pursue health? Probably not very. This seems like something you might want to talk to your teens about. — *Cultural Translator*, September 9, 2022.

Applause for Abortion by a Religious “Convention”

“Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—that you may do all these abominations?” — Jeremiah 7:9-10.

Report: “Kamala Harris gets a round of applause from the National Baptist Convention at its Annual Session in Houston, Texas, after she denounces ‘extremists’ working to outlaw abortion.” — *Multiple sources*.

and now this...

MSNBC’s Joe Scarborough: “Jesus never once talked about abortion. And it was happening back in ancient times. It was happening during his time. Never once mentioned it. For people perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ down to one issue, it is heresy.” We should consider taking Bible commentary from talk show hosts with a huge grain of salt (although I don’t think there is a grain of salt large enough for this one). Remember, Jesus

Why I View Twitter on Occasion

A young lady — looks to be about 16 — was singing the National Anthem at an NBA game with some hall of famers in attendance. She got about a third of the way through and forgot the lyrics and started to panic, as you can imagine. Hall of Fame Maurice Cheeks, standing about 15 feet away, came over and said, “you got this” and sang it with her. Pretty soon, everyone in the stands started singing as well. She finished the song in fine fashion and was visibly thankful to Cheeks for his help.

Sad Scene in the City

Christie and I were in LA for a few days this past week and we walked from our hotel in Marina del Rey to Venice Beach. On the way, we saw three men who were acting out in the extreme: one was standing in place, yelling incoherently; another was sitting down, grinding his teeth in anger, and another was walking while laughing and talking to himself uncontrollably. All three were filthy, barefooted and, obviously, homeless. They were not asking for money and there was nothing any amateur individual could do to help them. Those who have traveled throughout the U.S. know this scene is common, especially in big cities. It’s different in Europe.* In Vienna we saw a total of two beggars; both were “certified” by the local government (they had a badge) and allowed to sit in the town square. Both were without legs. Clearly, in Europe, the local or national government recognizes the problem and is, in some fashion, helping those who are mentally or physically disabled.

Opinion: Why aren’t we doing that here? Why aren’t our taxes being used to help people like this? When I lived in that area in the late 1960s people in this condition would be put in an institution and, in the best cases, cared for and given a shot to reenter society after extensive treatment. Admittedly, some institutions — “asylums” — were horrible, but others truly aimed to help or at least get these people off the streets. Now, they are left to fend for themselves because the government, apparently, has more important goals to spend their money on (like California’s multimillion dollar bullet train boondoggle). We know, too, from many recent events that mental illness left untreated has resulted in some horrendous crimes, including murder. May just be me, but I’m more concerned about human beings and than climate change.

*I’m not glorifying Europe (in Austria nearly every resident still pays taxes to the Catholic Church) and I don’t have all that facts, but it appears they have a better system for caring for the homeless and others in need.