

Romans 4:6-8

David was justified by faith

David was justified (put right with God) by faith. Paul's message so far in Romans has been to convince his readers that whether Jewish or gentile all are under sin, and all need to be put right with God by faith.

This week Clement Freud, a Jew, a brilliant man, a cook, broadcaster and MP, was exposed as a child abuser. Trial by media isn't a good idea, but in this case it seems he did it. How can this be? It is just one more proof that we are all sinners, even the exceptionally talented. There is a dark side to all of us – it's called the sinful nature.

Psychologists tell us that human beings are fallible, and we all share the impulse to justify ourselves and avoid taking responsibility for actions which are harmful, immoral or just stupid. We can blame other people, or the environment, or the alter ego, or our genetics, but sin is something we are supposed to take responsibility for.

In the TV program "Traffic Cops" cars are stopped, and people arrested by the police for doing things they shouldn't be doing. It is amazing the extent to which people will go, when caught, to deny, lie or make excuses for their particular transgression. But this tendency to make excuses for our transgressions extends to us all. Sin is by nature deceitful, always wanting to remain hidden, away from the light, in the dark. In the garden, when Adam sinned, the first thing he did was to hide. We rationalise our wrongdoing and attempt to justify ourselves. We refuse to come out into the light (John 3:19-21). We need not wear our hearts on our sleeves, but with God, He is all seeing (1Samuel 16:7), and He is everywhere present (Psalm 139:7), and we need to put things right with Him.

The presence of God is a bit like the presence of a policeman, depending on which side of the law you stand: both reassuring and unnerving. Of course God is much more than a policeman, He is our loving heavenly Father. But in terms of our relationship with God, all have sinned, and all stand on the wrong side of the law. No amount of denying it or self-justification will put us on the right side.

Isaiah 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Paul's message is that through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection we are justified, put right with God. That is, we are forgiven. This comes through repentance, confession and faith in Jesus. This is *justification by faith apart from works*. This wasn't new but it has always been God's way of putting people right with Himself, since the beginning.

In Romans 4:6-8 Paul shows that David was justified by faith apart from works.

David was a shepherd boy who became Israel's second king, from about 1010-970BC. David was a brilliant man, a poet and musician, a prophet and politician, and is described in the Bible as *a man after God's own heart*. He is widely credited with bringing stability to Israel, and is seen as their greatest king. He was ancestor of Jesus, who was called the son of David.

But like all men, David was a sinner; and like so many great men, he had a fatal flaw, which in his case was women. The story is found in 2Samuel 11:1-12:13.

2Samuel 11:1 says that in the spring the kings go off to war, but on this occasion King David decided to stay at home. As they say, the devil makes use of idle hands. David was in the wrong place at the wrong time, with time on his hands, and this is usually when we get into trouble. He was strolling on the roof of his palace when he saw a beautiful woman bathing. He sent messengers to get her, and he slept with her. Bathsheba became pregnant, so David hatched a wicked plan. He arranged for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, to be placed in the line of fire in the battle so that he would be killed. The plan worked, and David married Bathsheba. But ...

The thing David had done displeased the Lord (2Samuel 11:27)

Probably a better translation would be,

And the thing which David had done was evil in the eyes of the LORD.

The Lord misses nothing. For a whole year David was in denial, until fortunately for David and fortunately for the future of Israel, he was confronted by Nathan the prophet (see Galatians 6:1) Nathan recounted to David a parable of a rich man who took the one little ewe lamb of a poor man to give to a traveller. Nathan asked David, "What should be done to the rich man?" David burned with anger and said he should die! Then Nathan declared, *Thou art the man!* At that moment David was conscience stricken and all his defences fell away. He confessed his sin, and received forgiveness (2Samuel 12:13).

Later David penned the beautiful words of Psalm 32:1-2, *Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will never count against him,* (quoted in Romans 4:7-8). David was a man who knew what it meant to be justified by God's grace through faith.

What about us?

Ephesians 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.*