

Romans Chapter 4 - John Karmelich

Title "Avoiding a Halleluj-Me lifestyle"

This lesson requires me to use two words not in the dictionary. The first is "Halleluj-Me" which lots of us will recognize when our pastors tell us our focus is on us, and not God (as in Hallelujah). The other is "HallelujNo" which refers to people who believe they're not good enough to be saved or don't care to be involved in Christianity. Since I'm "preaching to the choir", I'm just going to focus on "halleluj-me" as that's a regular danger to any believer and the focus of Romans Chapter 4. To use a simple example, we may have done a really nice deed and now think God owes us! We might pray or study our bible to a point of exhaustion and think, "Well, God really owes me now! Halleluj-Me". My point's that type of thinking draws us away from God, just as much as "halleluj-no" referring to those who don't care about pleasing Him in the first place or falsely thinking they're beyond hope. I just want us to consider when we're thinking that we're something special a given moment, in effect we're not glorifying God as we're on a "Halleluj-Me" high! In the Gospels, Jesus was kind and helpful to everyone He met except for the devoutly religious Jewish leaders! That's because they thought their good works made them examples of "Halleluj-Me", and it "turned Jesus off"! Since we Christians, care about salvation, and particularly our salvation, let's discuss Chapter 4 and how to avoid those "Halleluj-Me" moments!

Chapter 3 ended by Paul claiming that he's a person of Jewish decent, "upholds the law", meaning they (Jewish nation) were given the task of explaining God's requirements to be with Him forever in heaven to the world. It does not mean all non-Jewish people are required to eat Kosher as a simple example. It just means they're to live by an example of what means being perfect in God's eyes. Since we can't live that way, (we're all flawed by nature), Paul explains in Chapter 4 how anyone can be saved, (outside of the law). Yes, I know this is old news to us veterans, but I'm going to go over this chapter emphasizing avoidance of "Halleluj-Me". Remember no chapter breaks exist in the original text! So, it (Verse 1) is a good spot to create a new chapter!

Paul opens this chapter talking about the first Jewish person Abraham. He's the one who God promised he'd be the father of a great nation and the father of many nations! His original name was Abram. The name means "father of many". He did not have his first child till he was about 100! I can just visualize people snickering at his name given his lack of children! Later, God renames him Abraham, since he'll become the father of many nations all without having any children so far! A key point here is God calls him righteous (meaning: in right standing before God) long before he had children or was circumcised. Paul's key point is Abraham didn't do ANYTHING to earn his right standing! The point IS Abraham is trusting in God's promise for His future. That's why Jesus emphasized the only thing God wants for us as Christians is to believe in Jesus (as God's son and died for all our sins! John 6:29). So, we don't have to do any works as Christians? Of course, not to earn points but out of gratitude! Chapter 5 gets into a long topic about what we should do with our faith. The point here is "Halleluj-Me" does not help to get into better standing with God. In fact, it makes it worse!

Keep in mind Abraham lived centuries before the Law was given. God asked Abraham to perform that ritual (circumcision) on himself chapters AFTER he was justified (think "just as if we never sinned"). I consider that Paul's main point here. Again, most of us Christians know this well, the problem all of us face is it's so easy to look at our good deeds and think "God owes me big time now!" That's the danger of "Halleluj-Me" in a nutshell! So, what's so bad about a pat on our back after something good"? That's not the issue. The danger is to think God owes us, or life will go well after that good deed! Abraham's life wasn't perfect after he sacrificed his son or did the circumcision ritual. The same way a Christian is

willing to go through a baptism ritual as a public display of our trust in God, so we're do good things as a sign of gratitude, not to earn His favor!

That led Paul to talk about David who lived centuries after the law was introduced. Most of us know he was guilty of adultery and murder! He knew this and still said being righteous (completely forgiven) is a matter of believing in God's promises for our lives, and NOTHING more than that! Paul says that we are blessed by simply believing in God and not by trying to earn His love for us! Again, it is just for us to realize God loves us simply because He does! God's not lonely that He needs people in order to be a happy God! He created humanity as a "thing" to express His love on. I always liked the idea that we're a wedding gift to His son (Jesus) who gave His life so that we can have our life eternally!

That leads us back to Abraham. He was called the father of many nations. Jewish people and Muslims do trace their literal ancestry back to Abraham, but in effect that's not what Paul is talking about. We're all sons of Abraham in the spiritual sense that we trust in His promise that He Himself will pay the full price for all our sins! That's why Paul states in Galatians 3:6-14 the "true" children of Abraham are the ones who trust in the promise that God Himself pays the full price for our sins. Again, I know I'm only "preaching to the choir" here, but it's so easy for each of us to focus on our good deeds as opposed only to what God did for us. That's why I'm "beating this point to death here!"

So why spend a whole chapter simply to make the point we're only saved by faith? Part of the problem is Jewish people are obsessed with believing one must earn their way into heaven. Religion is "doing a bunch of things to prove to God we're good people!" I always say the second sin recorded, after eating bad fruit, was Adam and Eve covering themselves with fig leaves. It was their realization they're not in good standing with God and "covered themselves". God then provided animal skins (the first recorded death was the implied killing of innocent animals to cover human skin!) Bottom line, Paul had to make a big deal about this because it's so easy for us to get our focus on us as opposed to on God.

If God did this for us, does that mean we can now do whatever we want? That's logical to ponder so it's the next issue Paul will bring up in the next chapter. As I was taught a long time ago, "I'm saved so the issue of doing what I want is a non-issue! What matters is what do I WANT to do about it?" Do I want to do good works? Yes! Do I do it for people to notice me? That's a waste of time and why I titled this lesson "Halleluj-Me"! Jesus spent most of his time with devoutly religious Jewish people criticizing all their works for that reason! God is never impressed with "Jalleluj-Me". Of course, we should obey all that He asks, not to impress Him or others but strictly out of gratitude for what He did for us and being a good witness for Him, which is why He created us in the first place!

I suspect none of you are impressed by what I write. I don't do this as a "Halleluj-Me" moment. I write as I can't stand not doing it! If God chooses to reward me for it, that is His business. Mine is just to do what He calls me to do! Hopefully each of us can have the same attitude and remind ourselves that we are not here to show God how good we are by our deeds, but simply out of gratitude choose to do good works SOLELY because that's why He made us in the first place!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading!

You can read the EXACT SAME FILE by either clicking on

Option #1:

biblestudyemail.com/karmelich_romans/romans04.htm

OR

Option #2 Reading the same file in Adobe Acrobat (pdf) Format:

biblestudyemail.com/karmelich_romans/romans04.pdf

Personally, I prefer reading options #2. It is easiest on the eyes.

That's it. Hope you enjoy it. Don't forget to fire up a prayer prior to your reading.