

ROMANS 4

I) Abraham Justified by Faith (4:1-8)

- A) Example of Abraham – highly respected by all Jews (Matt. 3:9; Jn. 8:33)
 - 1) “Our father” – Paul addresses his Jewish brethren
- B) If Abraham was justified by works (perfect law-keeping), he would have reason to boast (of his own accomplishments), but not before God (not about what God has done)
- C) Abraham believed God (faith), and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6)
 - 1) Referenced to three periods in Abraham’s life:
 - a) Told he would have innumerable descendants (Genesis 15:5-6)
 - b) Told that Sarah would have a child (Rom. 4:19-22)
 - c) The sacrifice of Isaac (Jas. 2:21-23) – living by faith was his pattern of life
 - 2) Abraham’s faith gave glory to God (v. 20)
 - 3) “Accounted” (Gk. *logizomai*) = credited, imputed, reckoned, counted (bookkeeping term – “put to one’s account”)
 - 4) Righteousness is accounted to men today, not based on perfect works [law-keeping], but as a gift based on faith in Jesus Christ
 - a) The righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us, nor is our sin imputed to Christ
- D) One who works (keeps the law) perfectly, wages are counted as debt (earned) not as grace
 - 1) One who does not keep law perfectly (cannot claim justification on the basis of perfection), but has faith in God (trust not in self but in God), his faith is accounted (credited to him) for righteousness (free of guilt)
 - 2) Paul does not contradict James concerning faith and works (Jas. 2:14-26)
 - a) **Paul:** works = perfect law-keeping
James: works = obedience of faith
 - b) **Paul:** Abraham was not justified by works of perfect law-keeping
James: Abraham was justified by works of faithful obedience
 - c) **Paul:** We are justified by faith, not by works of perfect law-keeping
James: We are justified by works of faithful obedience, not faith only
- E) David describes the blessedness of the man counted righteous apart from works [perfection]
 - 1) Psalm 32:1-2 – forgiveness of sins, sins are covered, not impute sin

Paul’s prime exhibit of justification by faith is Abraham, one who was beloved by the Jews as their forefather. Abraham could not boast before God of his perfect law-keeping, but it was his faith in God that was accounted (credited, imputed, reckoned, counted – put to his account) to him for righteousness. Please note that it was not the righteousness of another that was imputed to Abraham, but his own faith was imputed to his account for righteousness as a gift of God. The doctrine of our sins imputed to Christ and the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is false.

If one were able to keep the law perfectly, God would owe him salvation as a matter of debt. But salvation is a matter of grace because none of us perfectly keep the law. Paul quotes David (Psalm 32:1-2) about the blessedness of the man who is counted righteous apart from works, that is, by being forgiven of sins (sins not imputed to one’s account).

II) Abraham Justified Before Circumcision (4:9-12)

- A) Is this blessedness of justification by faith upon the circumcision only, or on both the circumcision and the uncircumcision?

- 1) Uses the example of Abraham again to answer this question
- B) Abraham's faith was accounted for righteousness while he was uncircumcised (Gen. 15:6; 17:10-14)
 - 1) Sign of circumcision = seal of the righteousness of the faith he had while uncircumcised
 - 2) Became father of all who believe, whether uncircumcised (Gentile) or circumcised (Jew)
 - a) All who "walk in the steps of the faith" of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:5-9, 26-29)
 - b) Justification not based on circumcision, but on faith in Christ

Paul continues to emphasize the example of Abraham by pointing out that his faith was accounted to him for righteousness while he was still uncircumcised. Abraham was circumcised as a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had while uncircumcised. In this way he became the father of all, Jews and Gentiles, who believe and walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham. Since Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness before he was circumcised, justification by faith is not based on whether one is circumcised, and it is faith that now connects God's faithful people to Abraham.

III) The Promise Granted Through Faith (4:13-25)

- A) Seed promise not given to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (Gen. 12:3)
 - 1) If by law, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect
 - a) This is because the promise would be conditioned on perfect law-keeping
 - 2) Law brings about wrath against sin [if no law, no transgression] (cf. Rom. 1:18; 1 Jn. 3:4)
- B) Promise is of faith, according to grace, that it may be to all the seed
 - 1) To those of the law (OT) and of faith (NT) – Abraham is the father of us all by faith (Gal. 3:6-9, 26-29 children of Abraham; Abraham's seed)
 - 2) Abraham believed in God who...
 - a) Gives life to the dead (*make it so he and Sarah could conceive*)
 - b) Calls things which do not exist as though they did (*know the future*)
- C) Abraham in hope believed, contrary to [an earthly] hope, and became the father of many nations
 - 1) Not weak in faith, even when he was past childbearing age and Sarah barren
 - 2) Did not waver [staggered not - KJV] at the promise of God through unbelief, but strengthen in faith, giving glory to God
 - 3) Fully convinced that God was able to perform what He promised – total trust
 - 4) Therefore, ***this faith of Abraham was accounted to him for righteousness***
- D) This was written not just for him, but for our sakes also
 - 1) Righteousness will be imputed (accounted) to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised for our justification
 - a) "Raised for our justification" = we are justified by His blood (5:9) that was shed on the cross and brought before the Father in heaven (Heb. 9:11-15, 23-26)

The seed promise was given to Abraham through the righteousness of faith, and he became the father of all those who believe. Abraham was not weak in faith and did not waver at God's promise. He believed in God who could give life to the dead, and call things that do not exist as though they did. He was fully convinced that God could do what He promised, and this faith of Abraham was accounted to him for righteousness. All of this is written for our benefit because our faith in God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead will likewise be imputed to us for righteousness. Next, Paul continues to rejoice in the blessings received by being justified by faith in Christ and begins to hint at the wonderful hope we have in Christ by faith.