

Roman Chapter 4

Romans 4:1 "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?"

Paul here, is using a question to drive a point home.

He is saying in essence, if anyone could boast of making himself acceptable to God in the flesh it would have been Abraham.

Not even Abraham was justified by the outward show of his faith in God by circumcising all of the males.

It was not the circumcising of the males that made him acceptable to God, but his great faith.

Paul uses the model of Abraham to prove justification by faith alone because the Jews held him up as the supreme example of a righteous man and because it clearly showed that Judaism with its works righteousness had deviated from the faith of the Jews' patriarchal ancestors.

We see in a spiritual sense, Abraham was the forerunner of the primarily Gentile church in Rome as well.

Romans 4:2 "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath [whereof] to glory; but not before God."

As we said before, Abraham did show the world of his great faith by his outward circumcision.

Christians make an outward show of their decision to follow Jesus by being baptized.

The truth is justification takes place in the heart.

Faith takes place in the inner man.

Faith pleases God.

When we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, we are justified by the washing of His blood.

If Abraham's own works had been the basis of his justification, he would have had every right to boast in God's presence.

That makes the hypothetical premise of verse 2 unthinkable.

Romans 4:3 "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Abraham believed God and left Ur of the Chaldees.

He was looking for a city whose maker was God.

He gave up his big home and wandered where God had sent him.

He dwelled in tents waiting for the city of God.

This faith Abraham had in God pleased God and Abraham was greatly blessed by God for it.

This is clearly stated in Genesis 15:6: "and he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Faith is not a meritorious work.

It is never the ground of justification, it is simply the channel through which it is received and it too, is a gift.

Counted or translated "imputed".

Used in both financial and legal setting, this word occurs 9 times in chapter 4 alone, means to take something that belongs to someone and credit to another's account.

It is a one-sided transaction, such as Abraham did nothing to accumulate it; God simply credited it to him.

God took His own righteousness and credited it to Abraham as if it were actually his.

This God did because Abraham believed in Him.

Galatians 3:6 "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Galatians 3:29: "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

**Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."
"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."**

Broadening his argument from Abraham to all men, the apostle here makes it clear that the forensic act of declaring a man righteous is completely apart from any kind of human work.

If salvation were on the basis on one's own effort, God would owe salvation as a debt.

But salvation is always a sovereignly given gift of God's grace to those who believe.

Since faith is contrasted with work, faith must mean the end of any attempt to earn God's favor through personal merit.

If work could get you into heaven, then there would be no place for faith.

In the flesh, we all die, but the life of importance is in the spirit which takes faith to inherit.

No one can work themselves into heaven.

That is not the key that opens the door.

The key is faith without works.

The secret is, after you have had faith and it has opened the door for you, then you desire to work for Him.

Galatians 2:16 "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

So, faith plus nothing makes us righteous.

"Justifieth the ungodly":

Only those who relinquish all claims to goodness and acknowledge they are ungodly are candidates for justification.

Romans 4:6 "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,"

The word imputeth means counteth.

Psalms 32:1-2 "Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [whose] sin [is] covered."
"Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guile."

Romans 4:7-8 "[Saying], Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." "Blessed [is] the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

In (verses 6-8), Paul gave us the scripture written by David in Psalms that was just given, written by David after his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, Uriah.

In spite of the enormity of his sin and the utter absence of personal merit, David knew the blessing of imputed righteousness.

Of course, the reason for all this is when we stand before Jesus, He will recognize His own.

He has paid the price in full for all of our sin.

Our sin died on the cross.

We are forgiven.

We are blessed, because we do not have to pay, Jesus paid for our sins in full on the cross.

In the following (verses 9-12), Paul anticipates what his Jewish readers would be thinking: And that is if Abraham was justified by his faith alone, why did God command him and his descendants to be circumcised?

His response not only answer those concerned with circumcision, but the millions who still cling to some other kind of religious ceremony or activity as their basis for righteousness.

Romans 4:9 "[Cometh] this blessedness then upon the circumcision [only], or upon the uncircumcision also?" for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

We are looking here for justification without keeping the ceremonial law.

Abraham was counted righteous before the keeping of the law.

He was made righteous in God's sight before he became a physical Jew.

Acts 13:39 "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

"Circumcision":

This is referring to the Jews and "uncircumcised" to the Gentiles.

Romans 4:10 "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."

The chronology of Genesis proves Paul's case as Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born.

Abraham was 99 when he was circumcised.

But God declared him righteous before Ishmael had even been conceived, at least 14 years before Abraham's circumcision.

All Paul is saying is that Abraham's faith before he was circumcised was counted as righteousness to him.

1 John 5:1 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

1 John 5:12 "He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

We find in both these Scriptures that it is not whether you are Jew or Gentile, but where you have put your faith (in the Son of God).

Romans 4:11 "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which [he had yet] being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:"

“Sign”:

This indicates man’s need for spiritual cleansing and of the covenant relationship between God and His people.

“Seal”:

An outward demonstration of the righteousness God had credited to him by faith.

Genesis 15:6 "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

You see Abraham believed, and that alone brought righteousness.

The circumcision came later for an outward show to the world that he believed God.

Romans 4:12 "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which [he had] being [yet] uncircumcised."

Just as Abraham was not justified by the rite of circumcision; neither was he justified by keeping the Mosaic law.

This just reminds us again, that Abraham is father to all who believe.

For by faith you are saved.

Romans 4:13 "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, [was] not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

This is referring to Christ and is the essence of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants.

The final provision of that covenant was that through Abraham's seed, Then all of the world would be blessed.

Paul argues that "the seed" refers specifically to Christ and that this promise really constituted the gospel.

All believers, by being in Christ, become heirs of the promise.

"Not through the law":

That is, not as a result of Abraham's keeping the law.

"Righteousness of faith":

Righteousness received from God by faith.

Galatians 3:18 "For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise."

We read who are saved in Galatians:

Galatians 3:7-9 "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed." "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

In all of this we must see the mighty hand of God working salvation for all who have the faith to receive it.

Salvation is a free gift.

Lord You must reach out and take it for it to be yours.

Roman Chapter 4 Questions

1. Who did Paul call Abraham in verse 1?
2. Why is Paul saying this in question form?
3. If anyone could boast of being worthy in the flesh (besides Jesus) who would it be?
4. Was he worthy in the flesh?
5. In verse 2, who would Abraham not be able to glory before?

6. What was the circumcision of Abraham really?
7. Where does faith take place?
8. What did Abraham do that was counted unto him for righteousness?
9. When Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, what was he looking for?
10. In Galatians 3:29, who are Abraham's seed and heirs to the promise?
11. Verse 4 says, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of ____.
12. In the flesh we all ____.
13. In verse 5, his faith is counted for _____.
14. By the works of the law who is saved?
15. Who in the Old Testament described the blessedness of righteousness being counted to us without works?
16. What does the word imputeth mean?
17. Where in the Old Testament is this stated by David?
18. In verse 7, who are the blessed?
19. In verse 8, who are the blessed?
20. In Acts chapter 13 verse 39, who are justified?
21. In first John chapter 5:1, we see that all who believeth that Jesus is the Christ are what?
22. In first John chapter 5:12, he that hath the Son hath what?
23. What is circumcision called in verse 11?
24. In Genesis chapter 15, what was counted unto Abraham for righteousness?
25. Who was the father of circumcision?
26. Who was the father of faith?
27. Verse 13 tells of the promise to Abraham, what was it?
28. In Galatians 3:7, who are the children of Abraham?
29. In Galatians 3:8, who would be blessed because of Abraham?
30. Salvation is a free gift, but what is our part in it?