

Pt 13 Romans 4:1-12, Abraham Justified by Faith

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 4:1-12

- 1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
- 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
- 7 *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*
- 8 *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*
- 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.*
- 10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
- 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:
- 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.

Last Sunday we finished up Chapter 3 and saw some very important doctrinal truths:

1. God is the creator of faith.
2. God sent His Son Jesus to be the justifier of faith.
3. It is our belief (faith) in Jesus that saves us.
4. The Law never did and never could save someone.
5. The righteousness of God manifested the Law.

Here in Chapter 4, Paul continues with the theme of righteousness and faith, and he uses the example of Abraham, the Jews most beloved patriarch, as proof of faith over Law.

- 1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

In classic Paul style, he asks another question the Jews would be asking and then answers it. That phrase **“What shall we say then”** is found **6-times** in the Book of Romans and the phrase **“What then?”** is found **4-times**. Paul is the only New Testament writer that uses this style of teaching.

Speaking of Paul – we were watching a documentary the other day about the faith of the founding fathers of the United States; Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and we saw from these men’s own writings that most of them were not Christians in the true sense. They were religious but they did not believe in Christ as the means of salvation and they did not like the Apostle Paul.

Thomas Jefferson, as many of you know, created his own Bible called **“The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth,”** which is commonly referred to as **“The Jefferson Bible.”** In his Bible, Jefferson removed all of Paul’s writings, the miracles of Christ, the resurrection, and any reference to Jesus being God. Jefferson called the Apostle Paul the **“first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus.”**

Thomas Paine referred to Paul as **“the manufacturer of quibbles.”**

Of course, most of these men were raised in the Anglican Church of England and they also were involved in Free Masonry and the Illuminati. While no doubt they believed in a Creator, it is unlikely that many of them were actually born-again believers.

- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

But here in our text in Romans 4, Paul brings up Abraham, justification, and works. Paul is dogmatically stating that **IF** Abraham were justified by works, he would have something to glory in, **BUT not before God**. It is very important that we understand this. If Abraham’s works had made him a saved man, he would be able to glory, but he wouldn’t be able to glory before God because it would mean that Abraham saved himself. Therefore, any glory that Abraham would receive for that would be before MAN, not God.

Then Paul tells us how Abraham actually was justified before God: **3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

Where does Paul get that from? Well, he goes all the way back to Genesis. In chapter 12 God had told Abraham to leave his home in the Ur of the Chaldees, he was 75-years old and Abraham obeyed and left his home and went where God told him to go.

Then it says in **Genesis 15:6** **And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.** Did you see that? This is the first teaching in the Bible that men are saved by faith. He was made **“righteous,”** or as we call it **“saved”** because **he believed in the LORD**. By faith and by God’s grace, Abraham was justified because God counted his belief to him for righteousness. It was not because of any work that Abraham did. I think this is about as clear as anything in the Bible.

Not only that, but Abraham also lived 400-years before the Law was instituted by God and given to Moses. He would not even know how to live by the Law that the Jews in Paul’s day lived by because it didn’t exist.

So, how was Abraham saved? By faith. **“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”** The word **“counted”** is the same as **“imputed.”** It means God “placed it into him.”

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

Here Paul is explaining that if Abraham had earned his righteousness through works then God wouldn’t have had to count unto him for righteousness, because Abraham earned it himself. He even explains in verse 5 righteousness can be had through believing in him that justifieth, not he that works.

Abraham didn’t “earn” his salvation, God placed it in him because of his belief (faith) in HIM. Make sure you pay attention to that – Abraham believeth on **him that justifieth the ungodly**. That means he believed in a person – God, or more specifically, the Messiah.

How do we know this? Because Jesus himself says this in **John 8:56** *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

Did Abraham understand who Jesus was back in his day? No, but he was looking for One who would be sent. One who was promised – the Jews Messiah, and that was Jesus.

Yes, Abraham believed in the promises of God and believed God would do what he said he would do, but more specifically, Abraham believed in HIM. It is the same thing that we must do to be saved today, we must believe in HIM.

You can believe the Bible but that does not save you.

You can believe in the miracles but that does not save you.

You can believe in the Virgin birth but does not save you.

You MUST believe in HIM to be saved.

Listen to what Jesus himself says about this:

John 3:15-18

15 That whosoever believeth **in him** should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth **in him** should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth **on him** is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It's all about believing in HIM.

At this point the Jews might still try to claim; "well, that was in Abraham's day before God gave the Law so that was different. But, after the Law was given then God changed how it worked and man had to obey the Law to be made righteous."

So, Paul used another man from the Jews past that they highly regarded, which lived AFTER the Law was given; Kind David:

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7 *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* 8 *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

Paul used David's very own words that he wrote in **Psalms 32:1-2**...*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

David is saying blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. This implies that this forgiveness and covering (which means atonement) was done from someone besides that man that committed the transgression. The sinner had nothing to do with it, someone else did – the Lord.

So, Abraham was made righteous before the Law without works and David was made righteous after the Law without works. In other words, salvation is not of the Law at all but is by faith in the One that can forgive sins.

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.* 10 *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

Now that Paul has used Abraham and David as examples of being made righteous without the Law and without works, he then covers the next argument the Jews would have – then it must have something to do with Circumcision.

Circumcision was what set the Jew apart from the Gentiles. It marked them as God's people. It must be Circumcision that saved Abraham then!

Paul says, Nope, because Abraham was made righteous BEFORE he was circumcised!

Remember, it was **Genesis 15:6** *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

We aren't sure of Abraham's age at that exact time, but we know he was 86 when he had his son Ishmael which was after he was declared righteous: **Genesis 16:16** *And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.*

And, Abraham was 99 when he was circumcised.

We are told that in **Genesis 17:1-11**

1 And when Abram was **ninety years old and nine**, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

So, there was at least 13-years, maybe more, between the time God declared Abraham righteous and when he was circumcised. So, obviously circumcision has nothing to do with it.

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:*

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.*

Paul also wants to make them realize it has nothing to do with the fact that Abraham was a Jew either. Salvation isn't just to those "of the circumcision," but also those of "uncircumcision" We aren't going to get into the next verses today but down in Verse 16, Paul will even go as far as to say that Abraham is the father of ALL those of the faith: **Romans 4:16** *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*