

Romans 4:1-12 - The Gospel of Faith Alone!

Scriptures:

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham our

Notes:
Paul uses Abraham as an example of
the kind of faith that pleases God.

'according to the flesh' – What did
he achieve through human effort?

father has found according to the flesh?

Scriptures:

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he

Notes:

G1344 – put right with [God],
declared righteous. "to be
justified v. — to be or become
judicially vindicated as having
complied with the requirements
of the law (of God)."

G2041 – one who
does good.

has *something* to boast about, but not before

G2745 -

God.

Scriptures:

Genesis 15:1-6 -
After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

2 But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

³ For what does the Scripture say? "*Abraham*

believed God, and it was accounted to him for

G4100 – VAAI3S -

G3049 – credited to his account.

righteousness."

G1343 – what is right.

Notes:

Quotation of Genesis 15:6. Paul is saying that Abraham was justified before God before he did any the great works of righteousness. God had just promised to give him a son in his old age and to make him the father of a nation so great in number that they couldn't be counted. Abraham didn't do anything to earn the righteousness of God except believe that what God said was true.

God then in Genesis 15:17 God declared that His promise to Abraham was unconditional. Regardless of what Abraham or his descendants did, God was going to keep His promise to Abraham.

The Greek word that is translated 'accounted' appears eleven times in Romans 4. It has the idea of crediting to one's account. Abraham didn't earn God's approval through works of human effort but through faith. Paul illustrates that in the next several verses.

Scriptures:

⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not

G3408 – compensation for work or services.

Notes:

If you work at a job and they pay you, it would not be an act of grace on the part of your employer. They owe you those wages because you worked for them.

counted as grace but as debt.

G5485 -

G3783 – what is owed.

Scriptures:

Hebrews 11:6 - Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Philippians 2:12-13 -

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Romans 5:6 - For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

⁵ But to him who does not work but believes

G4100 - think to be true, to believe, implying trust.

Notes:

'does not work' is referring to religious works or good works. Paul is discouraging working for your salvation.

Instead, if someone believes, or puts their trust in God, their faith is credited as righteousness before God.

on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is

G1344 - put right with, justify, vindicate, declare righteous, i.e., cause one to be in a right relation.

G765 - "irreverent person n. — a person lacking proper veneration and practice (toward those whom such is owed); usually toward God."

G4102 - "trust in the gospel n. — trust in Jesus as contained in the content of the Gospel."

'Him who justifies the ungodly' — God makes right those who are not right. If there were religious or spiritual or good works you could do to be right with God, then you would be the one justifying yourself. Justification is a work that only God can do. No amount of good works, or religious rites, or spiritual exercises can make you right with God. That doesn't mean that those things are not important, but they only matter to God if they come from faith. Faith precedes works. Without faith none of those things are pleasing to God ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

accounted for righteousness,

G3049 -

G1343 - what is right.

Paul said something that some might see as contradictory to what I just said ([2 Philippians 2:12-13](#)). Paul is not saying work so that you can be saved. What he is saying is since you are saved exercise your salvation — do the spiritual works of salvation. An illustration would be exercising to build muscle. Exercise does not create muscle. A muscle must exist before it can be exercised and grown.

Another concept that some struggle with is that God justifies the ungodly. In our human sense of justice, we think God should justify the good people. The problem is — there are no good people — all have sinned and fallen short. So God made a way to be the just One and the justifier of the ungodly sending Jesus to take the punishment of the ungodly. All they need to do is by faith receive Christ's sacrifice for their sin and they are made righteous before God ([Romans 5:6](#)). Holy God the Father can justify the ungodly through faith because God the Son died for them.

Paul then describes the blessing of being right with God through faith apart from works.

Scriptures:

1 Peter 3:18 - For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...

⁶just as David also describes the

Notes:

[Verses 6-8] – The problem with trusting in works to be right with God is that you can never be certain you have done enough, or the right works to be right with God.

A very clear picture of that is the sacrificial system of the Jews. They had to keep coming back to make sacrifices for their sin. Jesus' sacrifice was a once-for-all sacrifice (1 Peter 3:18).

blessedness of the man to whom God

G3108 – joy, happiness.

imputes righteousness apart from works:

G3049 – charge to account.

G5565 - without, besides, apart from, independent from; a marker of dissociation.

Scriptures:
 Psalm 51:16-17 - For You
 do not desire sacrifice, or
 else I would give it;
 You do not delight in
 burnt offering.
 17 The sacrifices of
 God are a broken spirit,
 A broken and a contrite
 heart—
 These, O God, You will
 not despise.

7

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds

Notes:
 Paul quotes King David from Psalm
 31:1-2 as David remarks about the
 blessing of God's forgiveness over
 his sin with Bathsheba. David broke
 three of the Ten Commandments; he
 coveted Bathsheba, he committed
 adultery with Bathsheba, and he
 murdered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.
 The Mosaic Law made no provision
 for these premeditated sins. Two of
 the three, adultery and murder,
 were punishable by death. God
 graciously forgave David for his sin.
 He didn't have to do anything,
 except acknowledge his guilt and
 believe the words of the prophet
 who told him God forgave him.
 David realized his forgiveness was
 the grace of God (Psalm 51:16-17).

are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

G863 – "to be
 forgiven (state) v. —
 to be or become
 pardoned or exempt
 from legal or
 personal
 consequences for an
 offense."

G1943 – "to be
 forgiven ⇔ be covered
 (state) v. — to be or
 become forgiven,
 conceived of as one's
 sins being or becoming
 covered up."

Scriptures:
 1 John 1:9 - If we confess
 our sins, He is faithful and
 just to forgive us our sins
 and to cleanse us from all
 unrighteousness.

8

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord

Notes:
 If we sin, and who doesn't sin, there
 is nothing we can do to atone for our
 sin. There is no work we can do or
 sacrifice we can make to make it
 right in God's eyes. There is no
 penance or ritual or religious
 exercise, like confessing to a priest
 that will result in forgiveness of that
 sin. The only remedy is to
 acknowledge that you sinned and
 believe that Jesus died for that sin (1
 John 1:9). Repent and believe and
 you are forgiven.

shall not impute sin."

G3049 – keep
 mental record,
 charge to
 account, keep
 records of debits
 and credits.

Even though King David was a
 sinner, his willingness to repent and
 believe resulted in God referring to
 him as a man after God's own heart.

Scriptures:

⁹ *Does* this blessedness then *come* upon the

Notes:

Circumcision was the outward and visible sign of God's covenant with Abraham. No uncircumcised man could claim any share in God's covenant.

circumcised ~~is~~ *only*, or upon the uncircumcised

also? For we say that faith ~~is~~ was accounted to

Abraham ^A for ^{OK} righteousness.

Scriptures:

¹⁰ How then was it ^{OK} accounted? While ^A he was

Notes:

For many Jews circumcision was a sign of their relationship with God – it made them right with God. Paul is saying circumcision doesn't make a Jew right with God because God declared Abraham as righteous about fourteen years before he was circumcised. Faith made Abraham right with God, not religious works.

~~is~~ circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while

~~is~~ circumcised, but while uncircumcised.

11 And he^A received the sign of circumcision,

a seal^{OK} of the righteousness^{HI} of the faith which

G4973 – “indication ⇔ seal
n. — a confirmation, proof,
or authentication of a status;
understood as if a literal seal
(a resinous fastener for
securing and authenticating
documents).”

he^A had while still uncircumcised, that he^A

might be the father[♂] of all those who believe^{HI},

though they are uncircumcised, that

righteousness^{OK} might be imputed to them

also,

¹² and the father of circumcision to those who

Notes:
Abraham was declared righteous while he was a Gentile, therefore he was the father of faith for both the Gentiles and the Jews. This also makes Gentiles, non-Jewish Christians spiritual relatives of the Jews.

not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also

walk in the steps of the faith which our father

Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

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