

## Romans 4

### Verses 1-4:

--(1-2) ***What then shall we say that Abraham our father had found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.***

--Paul stated the Law and the Prophets witnessed to this righteousness from God (See 1:2 + 3:21) and has proven that God is both Just and the Justifier of ***the one who has faith in Jesus***. Now he is going to prove from the Scriptures that the reception of God's righteousness through faith was always the plan, even in the lives of Abraham and David.

--Both Abraham and David were counted righteous by faith and not by works of the law. The Jews would point to both as examples of earning God's mercy through obedience and works; yet, both were sinners in need of a Savior.

***\*Joshua 24:2: And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.'"***\*

--To discover that even the greatest saints have no other standing than the weakest saints is difficult for many. There are still a lot of people who feel like God should accept their lives as "good people" who pay Him most of what He is due (in their minds) and that God's mercy will pick up the rest of their little misses. Deep down, they have something to boast about.

--One commentator calls this: *a mongrel method of justification*. Really, this becomes neither pure justice nor pure mercy. It is a false version of justification for Jew or Gentile.

--(3-4) ***For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.***

--***For what does the Scripture say?*** is the most important question! Do not forget—Paul was speaking truths that were as cross-culturally unacceptable as any we could imagine in our time! He was also speaking to people "familiar" with the Word of God and would use it to defend their position.

--Still, Scripture remains the final authority—always and for all time. \*Beware anyone who will not acknowledge the Scripture as their infallible and final authority.\*

***\*A.W. Tozer (Reclaiming Christianity): "The primary thing we need to keep in mind is to join nothing that questions the truth of the Bible. Any movement, any church or group anywhere that questions the truth of the Bible is one that you, as a believer, cannot afford to associate with."\****

--Paul rested, not only his argument, but his very life and ministry on what the Scriptures say.

***\*Don't listen to me, any other pastor, priest, church, tradition, ingrained culture, family, dearest loved one, etc. Listen to the Word of God.\****

--This is especially important because of: **11, 16, 23-25**. The Scriptures are written for you!

--So what happened with Abraham? *Reckoned* or ***accounted*** is a court word. It means on account of Christ's work and not our own.

--Seven times in this chapter, righteousness imputed from another is made the basis of justification: **3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 22** (see also Gal. 3:6).

--When Abraham received the Word of God, in exceedingly great and precious promises, he simply took God at His Word and then lived accordingly (though not perfectly).

--There is literally no mention of works in **Genesis 15:6**.

#### Verses 5-8:

--(5-6) ***But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:***

--God justifies the ungodly. Faith and belief are no work. We believe in the work of another.

***\*John 6:28-29: Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."\****

--Paul is now showing through David that Abraham's accounted righteousness is also expressed by the non-imputation of sins. God's merciful act to bless with forgiveness.

--(7-8) ***"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."***

--Here, Paul quotes from **Psalms 32**. Like David, many believers have sinned greatly, but that sin is not **accounted** against them. David is an example of someone whose great sin against the law was not counted against them.

--This remains true despite the reality of our particular sins and the reality of the pain and fallout of our sins. \*David had consequences, but also the blessings of forgiveness!\*

#### Verses 9-12:

--(9-10) ***Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?***

--Paul anticipates an argument that he no doubt heard many times before. A Jew might grant that Abraham's faith in God was credited for righteousness, but still say the principle was only applicable to Abraham's circumcised offspring. \*Judaizers\*

--Paul answers with an incredible and powerful statement. He is saying that God's covenant people began in faith, not works, from the very start. This was the central discussion of the council in **Acts 15**. Touching the topic of circumcision was cutting into the sinew of their very cultural life.

--Paul has a ready answer. God's pronouncement of Abraham's faith was said while he was still uncircumcised—some 13 or 14 years or more before his circumcision. **\*Gen. 15:1-6 & 17:9-14\***

--The righteousness of God through faith was available for both Jew and Gentile apart from the act of circumcision. Paul is totally flipping the script here on the Jews!

**--(11-12) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.**

--Circumcision, as given in its original state, was a seal of faith already possessed.

--Circumcision as a religious rite had nothing to do with being declared righteous. Paul hammers this point home three times: **while still uncircumcised** in 10, 11, 12.

**\*Galatians 5:2: Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.\***

--The act of circumcision was an outward act that was representative of an inward reality, just like our present-day baptism. \*Think of baptism in public, before all your relationships, or in persecuted countries.\*

--Paul says something amazing here in 11: **that he might be the father of all those who believe!** God did all this in Abraham's life on purpose. Why? Because we needed to know that God justifies the ungodly in Christ Jesus, not those who keep religious rites, rituals, or ceremonies like baptism, communion, christenings, confirmations, church attendance, giving, or circumcision.

#### **Verses 13-16:**

**--(13) For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

--Paul moves to head off the next problem and show that the credited righteousness of God through faith was also not contingent on the law of Moses, which would not come till some 430 years after God's Word to Abraham.

**--(14-15) For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.**

--The promise given to Abraham, if dependent on keeping the law, would be void because no one can perfectly keep the law! The blessings of the promise would never be fulfilled if they depended on our personal performance.

--The law only builds up our wrath because it turns what would be sin into transgression. The law proves the depths of our rebellion. \*Crossing known lines Vs. Falling short\*

--The full blessing of all of God's promises will only be known through faith—faith in the work of Jesus Christ.

--Faith and works are contradictory in terms of obtaining salvation, but they are complementary in terms of possessing salvation. **\*James 2:14-26\***

**-- (16) Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the**

***faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. . .***

--The principle is clear: What God provides in grace is appropriated by faith, not works. Given in grace and received by faith makes the promises ***sure to all the seed***—secure in the work of Christ.

--***(16) who is the father of us all.*** . . . Paul unashamedly puts himself (***us***) beside the uncircumcised Gentile of faith (Also take note that Abraham ***is*** still alive).

***\*Luke 13:28-29: There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.\****

--As our father in faith, Abraham is our example:

***\*Galatians 3:7+29: Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. . . And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.\****

**Verses 17-22:**

--***(17-19) (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of man nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.***

--And so we see faith resting ***in the presence of Him whom he believed—God.***

--The language of **17** could be translated: *God making alive dead ones, and calling things not being, being.*

***\*Scroggie (Salvation and Behavior): "Faith, in an evangelical context, is confidence in God and His Word. It is an assurance that what He has promised to do He will do. It is reliance upon God's known character. It is the re-echo in man's consciousness of the Divine Voice."\****

--Abraham trusted the Word of God—God Almighty! His life of faith becomes a pattern or example to follow. Abraham believed God's Word despite his own inability or unworthiness.

--***(20-22) He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."***

--***he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief.*** . . . But didn't Abraham fail at times? Yes, but not in unbelief.

--Biblical unbelief is more than a lack of information or a feeling of negativity. It is a moral rebellion that can and was often rebuked by the Lord. God has given each of us all we need to believe; the problem is that we choose to resist.

--Abraham endured many trials of faith—life direction; family; battle; circumstance; flesh; etc. He watched, as one by one, home, family (Father, Lot, Ishmael), friends all took another path while he walked on with God in faith.

--At times, he feared, he tried to help God, but he never doubted God's promises. Abraham was **fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform**. He pressed on after God, carried by an open and full sail, and became the Friend of God.

--Faith, though imperfect or immature, can be sincere and therefore be strengthened. What side of the line are you on in the end?

#### Verses 23-25:

--***Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.***

--How is this **also for us**? Because we must exercise the same type of faith in God's Word and character as Abraham did. God will be just as faithful to **account** us as righteous.

--This was Paul's own hope!

**\*Philippians 3:7-9: *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.\****

--Do I count all things loss for the knowledge of Christ and this righteousness from God?

--The word **delivered up** was used twice in the Septuagint in **Isaiah 53:6+12**.

--Notice again, **our offences**, not just those of *men* or *the world*.

--The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves His work on the cross was accomplished and will be carried on until it is fulfilled on the day we sit down and feast with Abraham in the kingdom of God.