

Romans Chapter 4

vv 1-3 “*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath [whereof] to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*”

Works are the principle of law. That is, it is “our righteousness,” as if we earned it. Chapters 1-3 proved we would not be able to earn righteousness on the principle of law. However a Jew might claim to inherit it from their father Abraham. Chapter 4 shows Abraham was counted righteous on the principle of faith, not by works. This happened before Abraham was circumcised, and before there was a law given (see Gen. 15:16, 17:24).

vv 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 (or as) righteousness.*”

Righteousness is the subject, not simply how it is obtained. (See vv 16-17) for the Jew. Righteousness or justification was on the principle of faith.

So it is by faith, not faith for righteousness. Faith is reckoned as righteousness, rather than works. Faith is on the principle of grace, works (of the law), the principle of debt, I do, you owe, as a reward. We seem to long for some sort of credit, but we are debtors to grace alone.

vv 6,7 “*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, [Saying], Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*”

Though guilty before God, a man is forgiven by faith! It was too late for David to think about keeping the law for righteousness. He had already broken the law.

vv 8-10 “**Blessed** is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in

uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.”

Promise had been made to Abraham while he was yet uncircumcised, consequently, gentiles were included, and Jews were also received by faith. Circumcision, in Abraham’s case was a seal of righteousness obtained by faith before he was circumcised. Showing it was not of works.

v 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:*”

The Jew gloried in Abraham, but we learn Gentiles were already in God’s Mind and purposes before the Jews existed as a nation. Given the name Abram (*high father*, Gen 11:26) God would change his name to Abraham (father of a multitude, Gen. 17:5) in view of his being father of a multitude of the nations. This was before the circumcision of Abraham (see Gen.17:23-24).

v 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.*”

For the Jew, without faith, he was not to say, “*And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*” (Mt. 3:9). Yet the Jew boasted in Abraham as being their father. “*They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*” (Jn.8:33). The Lord would need yet to say, “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad*” (see Jn. 8:56). Abraham did this by faith.

It is natural for us to want to be identified with the results of real faith, but not have’ in our hearts, the exercises of faith to walk in such a path. (See Heb. 11:6) May God grant us to believe Him.

v 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.*”

We have seen blessing for Abraham, and through him, but all are by faith, not by works. “*And the fa-*

ther 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". Promise and law are taken up in Galatians chapter 4:21-28 to show that law cannot be the principle of blessing, and so promise is spoken of here as being before there was law, on the principle of faith.

v 14 *"For if they which are of the law [be] heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:"*

Again Galatians takes up the question of promise and law, there showing heirs, if under law, differ not from a servant. We are sons, and consequently heirs (Gal.4:1- 7).

v 15 *"Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, [there is] no transgression."*

Law did not give righteousness, but demanded it. Because law was weak, through the flesh (to which it was given) instead of it bringing righteousness, it worked wrath, of judgment, because a known commandment was broken.. *"No transgression"* does not mean "no sin" for many sinned without, and before the law (Rom.2:12). *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law"*.

v 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,"*

Because law could only righteously work wrath, grace and faith were needed. This principle of faith was long before the law was given by Moses.. John's gospel shows that the coming of, and the death of Christ, enabled God to be gracious to all. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (1:16-17) *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me"* (12:32). This does not refer to simply the Jews.

v 17 *"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, [even] God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."*

Abraham, was well known to the Jews, as being their father, here it is seen he represents all who have faith. *"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham"* (Gal. 3:7).

v 18 *"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be."*

Again, the Jew boasted in Abraham as being their father, which he was naturally, (He begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob (Israel). *"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;"* (Matt.1:1-2). But by faith, he is the father of many nations.

v 19 *"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:"*

Like the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, Abraham, received promises when he and Sarah were beyond "the natural years" to bare children, but unlike the law, Abraham was strong not weak in faith. Thus he became *"father of many nations"*. But it was as *"not weak in faith."*

vv 20, 21 *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."*

Faith trusts in someone, or something, other than oneself. Abraham was a man of faith, he trusted in God, and what God had said. The promise of God was believable to faith, and Abraham believed, and did not stagger. Faith is confident, on another occasion, the faith of Abraham could say to his son; *"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here [am] I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where [is] the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together"* (Gen. 22:7-8). May the Lord help us to be simple in our life of faith.

vv 22-25 *"And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that*

raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

We have a greater truth to believe, but it is by faith we believe. We do not earn what we believe. Justification, and righteousness go together.