

## Romans Chapter Four

### Romans 4:1-8 – Abraham Justified by Faith

**v1.** "WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY THAT ABRAHAM, OUR FOREFATHER, HATH FOUND ACCORDING TO THE FLESH?" (ASV)

Paul continues the question of whether man is saved by the law of faith or the law of works in this chapter.

**Isaiah 51:2** calls the Jewish nation to " LOOK UNTO ABRAHAM YOUR FATHER, AND UNTO SARAH THAT BARE YOU; FOR WHEN HE WAS BUT ONE I CALLED HIM, AND I BLESSED HIM, AND MADE HIM MANY.." (ASV) Abraham is brought before us as, in this case, our example.

The conditions of salvation given through Jesus Christ, our Lord, constitute the law of faith. The Law of Moses, with its ceremonies, sacrifices and observances, constitutes the law of works. The law of faith requires the service of the heart, the inner man, because with the heart man believes. The law of faith changes the heart so as to make man fit for God's eternal blessings.

**v2.** "FOR IF ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, HE HATH WHEREOF TO GLORY; BUT NOT TOWARD GOD." (ASV)

Abraham was justified, but by which law? Was it the law of faith or by the works of the law? If he was saved by works, or the law of works, he might have something to glory or boast about; but if he was saved by faith, there was no room for boasting or glorying, except in God's blessing. Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised and because of his belief or faith in God he was faithful to do what God prescribed for him to do. In other words because of his faith in God; Abraham obeyed the commandments that God gave him - this is the same way man's faithfulness is measured today. Faith leads man to do the things that the one in whom he believes requires him to do. Faith leads man to trust, follow and obey God, the one in whom he has faith.

**v3.** "FOR WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE? AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (ASV)

God said unto Abraham: "...LOOK NOW TOWARD HEAVEN, AND NUMBER THE STARS, IF THOU BE ABLE TO NUMBER THEM: AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, SO SHALL THY SEED BE. AND HE BELIEVED IN JEHOVAH; AND HE RECKONED IT TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." **Genesis 15:5-6** (ASV)

## Romans Chapter Four

This was the same faith that led Abraham to trust God and to leave the home of his childhood, and proved itself by many acts of obedience; even to the point of being prepared to sacrifice his son just because God told him to do so.

**v4.** "NOW TO HIM THAT WORKETH, THE REWARD IS NOT RECKONED AS OF GRACE, BUT AS OF DEBT." (ASV)

Paul presents a very sound argument based on common sense. If we rely on our own works to merit salvation, our reward is reckoned not as a favor from God, not as a result of God's grace but rather as payment of a debt for works. The same principle applied when we receive wages for physical work. This is contrary to the entire principle of justification by grace. Man is a lost and helpless sinner and is saved by the grace of God. But, at the same time, he must accept God's grace by complying with the conditions that God has set up for man to access to his grace. These conditions must be met for him to be acceptable.

**v5.** "BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, HIS FAITH IS RECKONED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (ASV)

The one who does not seek to merit salvation by his works but walks in the way that God would have him to walk; walks in the law of faith. This law of faith given unto him by God (the one who justifies, or cleanses, the ungodly) -- it is his faith that leads him to do what God commands him to do. It is that faith that will be reckoned unto him for righteousness. It is that faith that is perfected by obedience--a faith that works through love. The fact that we do the things prescribed for us by God shows that our hearts are in the kind of condition that God requires of us and fits and prepares us for salvation.

This faith leads a man to walk in the works of God and as a result perfects itself, God will reckon that faith to us for righteousness.

**v6-8.** "EVEN AS DAVID ALSO PRONOUNCETH BLESSING UPON THE MAN, UNTO WHOM GOD RECKONETH RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM WORKS, SAYING, BLESSED ARE THEY WHOSE INIQUITIES ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM, THE LORD WILL NOT RECKON SIN." (ASV)

"BLESSED IS HE WHOSE TRANSGRESSION IS FORGIVEN, WHOSE SIN IS COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN UNTO WHOM JEHOVAH IMPUTETH NOT INIQUITY, AND IN WHOSE SPIRIT THERE IS NO GUILF." **Psalms 32:1-2** (ASV)

## Romans Chapter Four

David shows that the same reason which caused God to reckon Abraham's faith for righteousness will cause God to reckon our faith to him for righteousness.

Those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works are those whose sins have been forgiven.

God will not reckon or impute sin to the man who is submissive or obedient to his word.

### Romans 4:9-12 – Abraham Justified Before Circumcision

**v9.** "IS THIS BLESSING THEN PRONOUNCED UPON THE CIRCUMCISION, OR UPON THE UNCIRCUMCISION ALSO? FOR WE SAY, TO ABRAHAM HIS FAITH WAS RECKONED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (ASV)

Are God's blessings given because of man's faith in him given to the circumcision, Hebrews, descendants of Abraham who practiced circumcision only, or is it available to the Gentiles as well? Paul writes to Galatia:

**Galatians 3:7-8** "KNOW THEREFORE THAT THEY THAT ARE OF FAITH, THE SAME ARE SONS OF ABRAHAM. AND THE SCRIPTURE, FORESEEING THAT GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE GENTILES BY FAITH, PREACHED THE GOSPEL BEFOREHAND UNTO ABRAHAM, SAYING, IN THEE SHALL ALL THE NATIONS BE BLESSED." (ASV)

We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness; his blessings from God were given, not because of his works but because of his faith that kept him obedient to God.

**v10.** "HOW THEN WAS IT RECKONED? WHEN HE WAS IN CIRCUMCISION, OR IN UNCIRCUMCISION? NOT IN CIRCUMCISION, BUT IN UNCIRCUMCISION:" (ASV)

Was Abraham circumcised or uncircumcised when his faith brought about God's rich blessings? The Jews took great stock in the fact that their circumcision was a physical sign of their relationship to God as his people. God gave them this sign through their ancestor Abraham. We find God's commandment regarding this in **Genesis 17:9-10**.

But Abraham became a partaker of the blessings of God when he was justified by his faith and he was justified by this faith long before he was circumcised. Abraham wasn't circumcised until he was 99 years old and Ishmael was 13 years old. **Genesis 17:23-26**.

## Romans Chapter Four

This refuted that claim of the Jews, the judaizing teachers, who were trying to require and teach that there was no salvation as a Christian without circumcision. God's promises were made to Abraham (**Genesis 12:3**) long before the commandment for circumcision was given.

**v11.** "AND HE RECEIVED THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION, A SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE FAITH WHICH HE HAD WHILE HE WAS IN UNCIRCUMCISION; THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE IN UNCIRCUMCISION, THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE RECKONED UNTO THEM;" (ASV)

Abraham attained this state of blessedness or righteousness as a sign and seal of the faith he had in God before he was circumcised. If Abraham could attain this righteousness without the outward sign of being a Jew then the Gentile do so as well.

So then, Abraham is not only the father of the circumcised faithful but the uncircumcised faithful as well. Those whose faith has been perfected by obedience, that faith will be reckoned to them for righteousness just like Abraham.

Just as we noted earlier Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren "KNOW THEREFORE THAT THEY THAT ARE OF FAITH, THE SAME ARE SONS OF ABRAHAM." **Galatians 3:7**

It is not circumcision or uncircumcision that makes us a son of Abraham but rather our faith in God. This was a hard lesson for those who followed the Mosaic Law and the traditions and teachings of the Pharisees and the Jewish elders.

**v12.** "AND THE FATHER OF CIRCUMCISION TO THEM WHO NOT ONLY ARE OF THE CIRCUMCISION, BUT WHO ALSO WALK IN THE STEPS OF THAT FAITH OF OUR FATHER ABRAHAM WHICH HE HAD IN UNCIRCUMCISION." (ASV).

All those who would become children of Abraham by faith must walk in the same footsteps which faith led Abraham to walk. Abraham's faith led him to trust God so deeply and so strongly that he would destroy that son who was so dear to him. As God instructed, he made preparation and took a journey to sacrifice this son of promise on the altar to God. **Genesis 22:9-10**

When men perfect their faith by walking in the steps of Abraham or as Abraham walked; then God will reckon their faith for righteousness as well.

## Romans Chapter Four

### Romans 4:13-17 – Salvation by Faith

**v13.** "FOR NOT THROUGH THE LAW WAS THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM OR TO HIS SEED THAT HE SHOULD BE HEIR OF THE WORLD, BUT THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH." (ASV)

Abraham was never under the Mosaic Law, yet he was justified before God. The Mosaic Law was not to be given to the children of Jacob (Israel) until many hundreds of years later. Abraham walked by faith as you and I must walk if we expect to be God's children today. The law was added as a tutor or schoolmaster for Abraham's children in order to bring them back unto righteousness and prepare them for Christ's coming and when Christ came that law was taken out of the way. **Galatians 3:19-25**

The promise that Abraham's seed would inherit, or be heir of, the entire world was made to Abraham while he was still uncircumcised, and that promise was made unto him because he had, through faith, led a righteous life before God.

**v14.** "FOR IF THEY THAT ARE OF THE LAW ARE HEIRS, FAITH IS MADE VOID, AND THE PROMISE IS MADE OF NONE EFFECT:" (ASV)

If they (the Jews) who were under the Mosaic Law were heirs simply because they were under that law then faith is made of no effect or serves no purpose. Consequently the promise made to Abraham is also made of no effect or is made useless or void.

**v15.** "FOR THE LAW WORKETH WRATH; BUT WHERE THERE IS NO LAW, NEITHER IS THERE TRANSGRESSION." (ASV)

This clearly shows that where no law is given, no law exists, there can be no stepping outside of, going beyond, or setting aside of law. Because where there is no law; no law can be set aside, gone beyond or violated. If God never had given to man a law, he would have no law to transgress. But since God had given him law and he did transgress that law; his transgression brings God's wrath upon him.

## Romans Chapter Four

"BUT IF THE MINISTRATION OF DEATH, WRITTEN, AND ENGRAVEN ON STONES, CAME WITH GLORY, SO THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL COULD NOT LOOK STEDFASTLY UPON THE FACE OF MOSES FOR THE GLORY OF HIS FACE; WHICH GLORY WAS PASSING AWAY: HOW SHALL NOT RATHER THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT BE WITH GLORY? FOR IF THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION HATH GLORY, MUCH RATHER DOTH THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEED IN GLORY. " **II Corinthians 3:7-9** (ASV)

If violation of God's law of works, which was so great that Moses countenance shone when he returned from Mount Sinai, given through Moses brought condemnation; how much greater will be the condemnation of those who violate the law of righteousness?

"FOR AS MANY AS ARE OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW ARE UNDER A CURSE: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, CURSED IS EVERY ONE WHO CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO DO THEM." **Galatians 3:10**, quoted from **Deuteronomy 27:26** (ASV)

This law was given then because "WHAT THEN IS THE LAW? IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE HATH BEEN MADE; AND IT WAS ORDAINED THROUGH ANGELS BY THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR." **Galatians 3:19** (ASV)

**v16.** "FOR THIS CAUSE IT IS OF FAITH, THAT IT MAY BE ACCORDING TO GRACE; TO THE END THAT THE PROMISE MAY 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." (ASV)

The law of works apart from faith brings about the spirit of disobedience, (rebellion) in man and calls down upon him the wrath of God. We see this in the history of Israel repeatedly. That law could not save men from God's wrath. But salvation comes through the law of faith and not of works. Faith changes the heart, and the law growing out of faith does not generate rebellion, but makes the heart desire to perform the law.

The "seed" are those who believe in God. God's promise is to all the seed of Abraham, all those who become his seed through their faith.

Then the promise came through the law of faith that it might be to all the seed – not just to the Jews only who are of the Mosaic Law, but to those who walk in the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all -- Jews and Gentiles -- who believe.

## Romans Chapter Four

"BUT THE SCRIPTURES SHUT UP ALL THINGS UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE." **Galatians 3:22**

Paul says "BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS." **Romans 3:24**

**v17.** "(AS IT IS WRITTEN, A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE THEE) BEFORE HIM WHOM HE BELIEVED, EVEN GOD, WHO GIVETH LIFE TO THE DEAD, AND CALLETH THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT, AS THOUGH THEY WERE." (ASV)

"AS IT IS WRITTEN" is **Genesis 17:5** - again the promise to Abraham. This makes him the father of all who have his faith from every nation as every new child of God fulfills this promise to Abraham.

Therefore Abraham is the spiritual father of all who believe before God in whom he believed.

God, who controls nature, can revive the dead, or call them back into existence that have already existed and gone on to their reward, make them just as they were.

Faith gets its character from the fact that it accepts God. Abraham looked on him as one who, in spite of nature, could make the dead alive again. This is the leading thought in this section. God "CALLET THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT", not as in the possibility of nature, "AS THOUGH THEY WERE". Abraham looked upon God as one who could suspend or had control over natural law. Perhaps he was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac because he knew without any doubt that God could indeed raise either this son or give him another to carry out the promise given.

Paul tells the Corinthians that "...BUT GOD CHOSE THE FOOLISH THINGS OF THE WORLD, THAT HE MIGHT PUT TO SHAME THEM THAT ARE WISE; AND GOD CHOSE THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD, THAT HE MIGHT PUT TO SHAME THE THINGS THAT ARE STRONG; AND THE BASE THINGS OF THE WORLD, AND THE THINGS THAT ARE DESPISED, DID GOD CHOOSE, YEA AND THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT, THAT HE MIGHT BRING TO NOUGHT THE THINGS THAT ARE:" **I Corinthians 1:27-28** (ASV)

## Romans Chapter Four

### Romans 4:18-25 – Abraham's Great Faith

**v18.** "WHO IN HOPE BELIEVED AGAINST HOPE, TO THE END THAT HE MIGHT BECOME A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS, ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH HAD BEEN SPOKEN, SO SHALL THY SEED BE." (ASV)

"SO SHALL THY SEED BE" is quoted from **Genesis 15:5**. This refers to the fact that Abraham, after he had grown old and all hope of he and Sarah having a natural son had vanished. There was still hope in the promise of God.

His faith enabled him to become the father of many nations, according to the promise both literally through Isaac and Ishmael but also spiritually through Jesus Christ, who was also his descendent.

**v19.** "AND WITHOUT BEING WEAKENED IN FAITH HE CONSIDERED HIS OWN BODY NOW AS GOOD AS DEAD (HE BEING ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS OLD), AND THE DEADNESS OF SARAH'S WOMB;" (ASV)

Abraham's strong faith enabled him to believe God and hope for the seed in spite of the fact that both he and Sarah had passed their childbearing years. So far as natural childbearing was concerned they were no longer physically capable.

Did Abraham have this kind of faith the first time that God broached the subject to him about bearing a son after the promise? **Genesis 17:17** "THEN ABRAHAM FELL UPON HIS FACE, AND LAUGHED, AND SAID IN HIS HEART, SHALL A CHILD BE BORN UNTO HIM THAT IS A HUNDRED YEARS OLD? AND SHALL SARAH, THAT IS NINETY YEARS OLD, BEAR?" (ASV)

**Hebrews 11:11** "BY FAITH EVEN SARAH HERSELF RECEIVED POWER TO CONCEIVE SEED WHEN SHE WAS PAST AGE, SINCE SHE COUNTED HIM FAITHFUL WHO HAD PROMISED:" (ASV)

**v20.** "YET, LOOKING UNTO THE PROMISE OF GOD, HE WAVERED NOT THROUGH UNBELIEF, BUT WAXED STRONG THROUGH FAITH, GIVING GLORY TO GOD," (ASV)

He did not doubt the fulfillment of God's promise though disbelieving him at the beginning. He gave God the glory by exalting and honoring him as one worthy of the highest praise and most faithful service is an exceptional service to God. This was the kind of service that Abraham rendered to God.

**v21.** "AND BEING FULLY ASSURED THAT WHAT HE HAD PROMISED, HE WAS ABLE ALSO TO PERFORM." (ASV)



## Romans Chapter Four

Abraham had full confidence that God could and would provide exactly what he promised.

The psalmist says that "...BUT OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS: HE HATH DONE WHATSOEVER HE PLEASED." **Psalms 115:3**

In the faith chapter of **Hebrews (11:18-19)** God through the Holy Spirit tells us this way. "EVEN HE TO WHOM IT WAS SAID, IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED: ACCOUNTING THAT GOD IS ABLE TO RAISE UP, EVEN FROM THE DEAD; FROM WHENCE HE DID ALSO IN A FIGURE RECEIVE HIM BACK." (ASV)

**v22.** "WHEREFORE ALSO IT WAS RECKONED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (ASV)

Because Abraham thus believed God in spite of the difficulties of fleshly nature that seemed to forbid it; God reckoned this faith to him for righteousness. Was this faith of Abraham something that just came to him overnight? No. This faith and trust in God had been cultivated and perfected through thirty years by acts of obedience, and was not a mere sentiment of faith apart from works.

**v23.** "NOW IT WAS NOT WRITTEN FOR HIS SAKE ALONE, THAT IT WAS RECKONED UNTO HIM;" (ASV)

This was certainly written for Abraham's sake and his honor but not his alone. It also looked forward to the coming of Christ and to those who should be redeemed through him. Paul had us in mind as he wrote and as he related how Abraham believed and that it was reckoned to him.

**v24.** "BUT FOR OUR SAKE ALSO, UNTO WHOM IT SHALL BE RECKONED, WHO BELIEVE ON HIM THAT RAISED JESUS OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD,"

Peter declared before the multitude on Pentecost that this was the Christ "WHOM GOD RAISED UP, HAVING LOOSED THE PANGS OF DEATH: BECAUSE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF IT." (ASV) **Acts 2:24**

Paul makes the same kind of declaration in his sermon recorded in **Acts 13:30** where he preached to the people of Antioch.

If we believe in Jesus Christ and perfect our faith in obedience to him as Abraham did unto God, then God will reckon our faith to us for righteousness the same way.

## Romans Chapter Four

**v25.** "WHO WAS DELIVERED UP FOR OUR TRESPASSES, AND WAS RAISED FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION." (ASV)

This is a comprehensive statement of the gospel of Christ. It encompasses the whole purpose of God giving his Son for the redemption of mankind.

Christ was delivered unto death for our sins.

**Isaiah 53:5-6** "BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM; AND WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED. ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY; WE HAVE TURNED EVERY ONE TO HIS OWN WAY; AND JEHOVAH HATH LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL." (ASV)

The delivering of Christ is ascribed to God "HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?." **Romans 8:32** (ASV)

This delivering is also ascribed to Christ **Titus 2:14** "WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS." (ASV) (See also **Galatians 1:4**)

and to wicked men. **Luke 24:20** "AND HOW THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND OUR RULERS DELIVERED HIM UP TO BE CONDEMNED TO DEATH, AND CRUCIFIED HIM." (ASV)

It was by the divine purpose and counsel of God that he suffered for the sins of the world and he gave himself willingly. "HE WAS OPPRESSED, YET WHEN HE WAS AFFLICTED HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH; AS A LAMB THAT IS LED TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND AS A SHEEP THAT BEFORE ITS SHEARERS IS DUMB, SO HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH. BY OPPRESSION AND JUDGMENT HE WAS TAKEN AWAY; AND AS FOR HIS GENERATION, WHO AMONG THEM CONSIDERED THAT HE WAS CUT OFF OUT OF THE LAND OF THE LIVING FOR THE TRANSGRESSION OF MY PEOPLE TO WHOM THE STROKE WAS DUE?" **Isaiah 53:7-8** (ASV)

The resurrection of Christ was necessary for our justification -- that is in order to complete God's provision to remove man's sins and put that justification into effect. Had he not risen, we would yet be under condemnation. Just as Paul declared to the Corinthians:

## **Romans Chapter Four**

"AND IF CHRIST HATH NOT BEEN RAISED, YOUR FAITH IS VAIN; YE ARE YET IN YOUR SINS." **I Corinthians 15:17** (ASV)