

How Do We Then Live?

Week 1 - Romans 4

? Have you ever gotten something of great value for free? (Maybe a contest you won, a Facebook marketplace gem, etc.)

Objectives:

- Faith is key...not works.
- God justifies the ungodly. That's all of us. Trust him in everything.

How you read the Old Testament changes everything about this passage. Paul understood the Old Testament much differently before his conversion on the road to Damascus. He believed that if he followed all the rules, God owed him salvation. You can read the Old Testament and completely miss Jesus, the one who “had power to do what he had promised” and who laid down his life so that all could be right with God.

Righteousness Through Faith

? Paul begins chapter 4 with a transitioning question about Abraham's experience “in this matter”. Can someone summarize a few of the key points Paul has made so far in chapters 1-3?

Possible answers: Humanity is sinful and in need of rescue from our sins. Obedience to the law won't save us. Jesus' death and resurrection brought salvation to all.

Romans 4 NIV

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to

them.¹² And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless,¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."²³ The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

? Many Jews viewed Abraham with reverence and viewed his life as one of devotion to God and filled with great works. How does Paul's description of Abraham in this chapter differ from that view?
Possible answers: Paul describes Abraham's life as one of faith where he was credited righteousness by the grace of God before he had responded with any works. Paul gets right to the point in verses 2-3 with this premise for the chapter.

? Which came first, Abraham's faith or his circumcision? Why is this important?
Possible answers: Abraham was saved by faith not by his own works. However, Abraham's obedience still followed his saving faith. We are not set free by our obedience; we are set free to and for obedience. In Genesis, Abraham was credited righteousness in chapter 15 but was not circumcised until chapter 17. Circumcision is not what justified Abraham, rather it was a symbol of the justification he received from God.

? What does it mean that God credits faith with righteousness?
Possible answers: Christ's righteousness is transferred to us as a gift of God because of the price that Christ paid on the cross.

Theological Term: Imputation. We have no righteousness of our own; Christ's righteousness is imputed, or transferred, to us through his death. Conversely, our sin is imputed to Christ. Martin Luther once dubbed these imputations as the "glorious exchange." We get what Christ deserved and Christ got what we deserved.

Abraham's Faith

Genesis 15

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."² But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.⁷ He also said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."⁸ But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"⁹ So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

¹³ Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.¹⁵ You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."



How does this story further illuminate Abraham's faith and God's promise?

Possible answers: Abraham's faith was great because he was nearly 100 years old at the time he had Isaac in Chapter 17. It would have been very difficult for him not to believe he couldn't have children.

For Discussion and Accountability



What was God telling you through this passage this week? What did you need to hear?



In what areas of your life do you tend to think your works will save you? How can we help point you back to Jesus' work on the cross this week?