



A Study of Romans

Month 4: Romans Chapter 4

The Faith and Fatherhood of Abraham



Overview

Chapter 4 of Romans addresses the issue of justification through the teachings of the Old Testament, specifically revolving around the figure of Abraham. Paul, knowing that Abraham is the founding patriarch of the covenant people, shocks his Jewish audience by claiming Abraham is also the spiritual father of believing Gentiles, and that they are no less justified than believing Jews. By examining the story of Abraham in Genesis, Paul argues that the gospel of justification by faith for Jews and Gentiles alike confirms rather than conflicts with Mosaic Law.

1. The Justification of Abraham (4: 1-12)

- 1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?**
- 2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.**
- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.**
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**
- 6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,**
- 7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**
- 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**
- 9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**
- 10 How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**
- 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:**
- 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.**

Key Points:

- Abraham's faith is what made him righteous, not his observance of the law.
- David is used as a second witness to show that justification includes God's merciful act of pardon.
- Scripture is used to establish that Abraham's justification was never been tied to circumcision.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Paul refers to both Abraham and David as examples to make his arguments about justification and righteousness?
2. What other point does Paul make about God's forgiveness by using Abraham and David as examples?
3. How does Paul make his point about God's blessing of Gentiles by using the circumcision of Abraham as an example?

2. The Promise to Abraham (4:13-17)

- 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.***
- 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:***
- 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.***
- 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,***
- 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.***

Key Points:

- Abraham's became the father nations of the world through faith, not through the Law.
- The promise made to Abraham occurred long before the law.
- Paul cites God's promise to Abraham that "I have made thee a father of many nations"

Questions:

1. Why does Paul clarify that the promise of a worldwide inheritance by Abraham and his offspring did not come through Mosaic Law?
2. The promise made to Abraham was made long before the Law was conveyed. Why do you think the timing of his role is important to Gentiles?
3. What are your thoughts about what is meant by referring to God as "*who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were*"?

3. The Faith of Abraham (4:18-25)

- 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.*
- 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:*
- 20 *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*
- 21 *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*
- 22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*
- 23 *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;*
- 24 *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*
- 25 *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

Key Points:

- Abraham was empowered by faith and was fully convinced that God was able to do what was promised to him.
- Righteousness was credited to Abraham through his unwavering confidence in God.
- God will credit righteousness to all who believe.

Questions:

1. What are your thoughts about why Paul uses Abraham as an example of unwavering faith?
2. What parallels do you see between the birth of Isaac and the resurrection of Jesus?
3. What parallels do you see between the faith of Abraham and the faith of Christians?

----- END OF LESSON -----

NEXT MONTH – read Romans 5:1- 21

Covering: Peace with God through Christ; Reconciliation with God through Christ; Sin and Death through Adam; Disgrace in Adam, Divine Grace in Christ