

Romans

PART 06

HOW GOD JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY - ROMANS 4

The Gospel Was Always The Plan

How can a sinner be made right with a holy God? In Romans, Paul talks about about the profound implications of the gospel to the whole world, and backs up his assertions by methodically addressing oppositions from the Jews. He shows the Old Testament is a consistent narrative pointing to Christ at Calvary, and that the gospel is in accordance with everything God set up in the Old Testament. Salvation is by grace alone because no one could achieve it by their own merit, and the law serves to prove that. Romans shows that the gospel is not a novel concept, but rather it was “promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures.” There is one way for salvation in both the Old and New Testament: Justification by faith. The whole Bible presents one continuous plan devised by God’s counsel. How is the sinner made right? By grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone.

ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

Paul will use a great hero of the Jewish faith as evidence for justification by faith.

VS 1-8 *Abraham was not justified by works*

VS 16-22 *Abraham was justified by faith*

VS 9-12 *Abraham was not justified by circumcision*

VS 23-25 *His faith is our same faith today*

VS 13-15 *Abraham was not justified by the law*

Chapter Highlights

VS 1-3

If Abraham was justified by works, he could have grounds to boast, but the Scriptures say that righteousness was counted to him because he believed what God told him. The Hebrew word for “he believed” is ‘āman, from which we get the word “Amen.” He said “Amen” to God’s promise. What promise did God give him? God said Abraham would be a father of many nations, and Messiah would come from his line. 1400 years before Romans was written, the gospel was always the story.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

JOHN 8:56

VS 1-3 CONT.

God proclaimed the gospel to Abraham even though he did nothing to deserve it. When God called the father of all the Hebrews, there was nothing good about him. In fact, he was called in uncircumcision and idolatry. Therefore it was not by works that he was counted righteous.

KEY CONCEPT- LOGIZOMAI

The word translated "counted" or "credited" or "imputed" is used 11 times in this chapter. It's an accounting or bookkeeping term that means "to number, reckon, or make an account of." It could be used of transferred assets that are credited to another account.

This is how God justifies the wicked. They are credited as righteous because someone else's righteousness is posted to their account. God takes his perfect righteousness and credits it to the sinful one because of Jesus. This is a gift of grace that is not owed.

VS 4-8

Wages paid for work done is not a matter of grace. Justification is not earned. It is by believing in the one who justifies the ungodly, and their faith is **logizomai'd** for righteousness. We are not saved by being godly, for only forgiven people are counted righteous. This was true of both Abraham and David, two of the most important Jewish figures. David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God doesn't credit sin in Psalm 32, which is quoted here in Romans 4.

VS 9-12

Is this blessing only for circumcised ones? No, because circumcision was only a sign of the righteousness that was imputed by faith. Abraham was uncircumcised when he was justified. He was 86 when he was counted righteous, and 99 when he was circumcised. A 13 year difference! Why did God do it this way? Because the gospel was purposed to be for all who believe, not just for circumcised people. Abraham is the father of believing to ALL. Circumcision was just an outward mark of an inward reality, and it does not make salvation by grace exclusively Jewish.

VS 13-15

What about the law? Well, Abraham was 430 years before the law. The nature and demands of the law is not like the nature of the covenant promises God made to Abraham. Unlike the law, there were no conditions on Abraham's part. He just watched God make promises and he believed them. The law can't bring the gospel promise of eternal life; it only points out sin. If it was by lawkeeping, that would make the promise of faith that came much earlier null and void.

VS 16-22

Since it is by faith, it is only by grace that a person is saved. It is sure to all people this way, because we can't mess it up. Those who believe in Jesus Christ out of every nation have the same credited righteousness as Abraham and are heirs of the world with him.

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 8:11

God brings to life the dead and calls things into being that do not exist. The gospel story is displayed to Abraham in that God promised new life despite the condition of their barren bodies, where it looked like no life would spring up. This is what he does in Christ. Abraham knew the futility of his flesh, but he trusted God's promise regarding his seed. It is the righteousness of that son that was credited to him. Against hope, he believed in hope, because he trusted a promise-keeping God who is able to do what he promised. Real faith is not ignoring the facts, but looking beyond them, fixing our eyes on God's promises. Having been shown the gospel, Abraham did not stagger in unbelief.

VS 23-25

These things were written thousands of years ago, not only for Abraham's sake, but for ours too! It was written so we can know that righteousness comes by faith in God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God puts our sins on Jesus' account, and his righteousness is credited to us. Quite a credit exchange! He was delivered up to crucifixion for our trespasses, and raised for our justification.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

ISAIAH 53:6

Conclusion

We can learn a lot from the justifying faith of Abraham. He realized the deadness of his and Sarah's flesh, yet he still believed God's promise despite everything he knew to be true of himself. I can believe God's promise that I stand righteous before him, despite the sins of my past and the failings of my flesh. God calls what is not as though it is. He rightly calls me what I am not, crediting to me the righteousness of Christ, by grace through faith alone.

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