

**Bible Basics 2019:
Session 4**

Romans Chapter 4

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In Romans 4 Paul reinforces the message in chapter 3 verses 21 to 31

- ‘For we reckon that a man is justified by faith...’ (3:28)
- **In Chapter 4 verses 1 to 8 Paul examines the cases of Abraham and David to prove this**
- ‘It is one God who shall justify [the] circumcision on the principle of faith, and uncircumcision by faith’ (3:30)
- **In Chapter 4 verses 9 to 12 Paul addresses Jewish prejudice in relation to circumcision**
- ‘For we reckon that a man is justified... without works of law’ (3:28)
- **In Chapter 4 verses 13 to 16 Paul addresses Jewish prejudice in relation to the law**

Paul also shows the connection between what Abraham believed and what we believe

- Abraham believed the God who... ‘quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being’ (4:17-22)
- We believe ‘on Him who has raised from among [the] dead Jesus our Lord...’ (4:23-25)



The examples of Abraham and David



- Is justification by faith a principle only found in the New Testament?
- No! It is an Old Testament principle too
- The cases of Abraham (vv. 1-4, 9-22) and David (vv. 4-8), show this, the two most prominent men in the OT
- Both were justified before God by faith alone

‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned it to him as righteousness’ (4:3; Gen. 15:6)

- In the case of Abraham Paul can refer to Genesis 15 verse 6 to establish this point
- God had said: ‘Look now toward the heavens, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said to him, So shall they seed be’ (Genesis 15:5)



‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned it to him as righteousness’ (4:3; Gen. 15:6)



- He believed what God said to him and this was reckoned to him as righteousness
- Because Abraham’s righteousness was of faith and not of works there was no basis for boasting

‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned it to him as righteousness’ (4:3; Gen. 15:6)

- In the very first book in the Bible then two important principles are clearly established:
 1. God justifies the ungodly without works and
 2. The faith that believes God is reckoned to the believer as his/her righteousness
- (God is righteous in reckoning the believer righteous because Christ died for us)
- In the New Testament this is called the righteousness of God (Romans 1:17; 3:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Peter 1:1))

‘Blessed [they] whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered: blessed [the] man to whom [the] Lord shall not at all reckon sin’ (4:7-8)

- Paul can also refer to the case of David to demonstrate the same principle
- Psalm 32 vv. 1-2 shows that he too was justified before God by faith without works
- Under the law the judges were to ‘justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.’ Deuteronomy 25:1
- But by faith he was justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39)

‘Blessed [they] whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered: blessed [the] man to whom [the] Lord shall not at all reckon sin’ (4:7-8)

- David knew that because of his faith God did not reckon his sins to him
- For this reason he could speak not only of himself as happy but all those happy who are in the same position through faith
- Hence, the title of Psalm 32 is ‘Of David. Instruction’
- This is the basis of the Christian believers’ peace and happiness too (5:1)



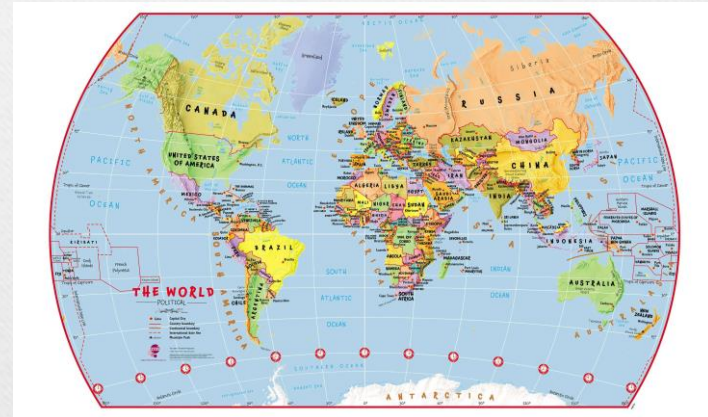
‘[Does] this blessedness then [rest] on the circumcision, or also on the uncircumcision’ (4:9)

- Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6) some 15 years before God introduced circumcision as the sign of His covenant with him (that Abraham should be heir of the world)
- Circumcision was the ‘seal of the righteousness of faith which [he had] being in uncircumcision’



‘[Does] this blessedness then [rest] on the circumcision, or also on the uncircumcision’ (4:9)

- This was ordered of God in order that Abraham might also be the spiritual father of those who believe from among the nations
- That righteousness might be reckoned to them too through their faith



Paul speaks of Abraham as ‘... father of the circumcision...’ in a two-fold way

1. Firstly, as father of those ‘who are of [the] circumcision’ (4:12)
 - (That is, **believers from among the Jews** who when Jews had been literally circumcised)
2. But also as ‘father of circumcision... to those also who walk in... faith during uncircumcision’
 - (That is, **believers from among the nations**)
 - Though literally uncircumcised, their faith in God and His word is also reckoned to them as righteousness.

Every Christian believer has been ‘circumcised with circumcision not done by hand’ (Col. 2:11)

- The Old Testament looked forward to this:
- ‘And Jehovah thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed...’ (Deut. 30:6. See also Jer. 4:4)
- It was accomplished ‘in the circumcision of the Christ’ (Christ’s death. Col. 2:11)
- By His death there was ‘the putting off of the body of the flesh’ (Col. 2:11)



Spiritual circumcision: our response

- That we ‘put to death’ our ‘members which [are] upon the earth’ (Col. 3:5)
(We are to be practically in the state of having done it)
- To live day by day as those ‘who have no confidence in the flesh’ (Phil. 3:3)
- This is what walking ‘in the steps of the faith, during uncircumcision, of our father Abraham’, involves



‘See to dogs, see to evil workmen, see to the concision’ (Phil. 3:2)

- Those that would introduce Jewish principles and practice, including literal circumcision, into Christianity are denounced
- The word concision was used as ‘a play on words.’ Circumcision in the flesh was now merely a mutilation
- ‘For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision...’ (Gal. 5:6)
- ‘We are the circumcision, who worship God by the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh’ (Phil. 3:3)

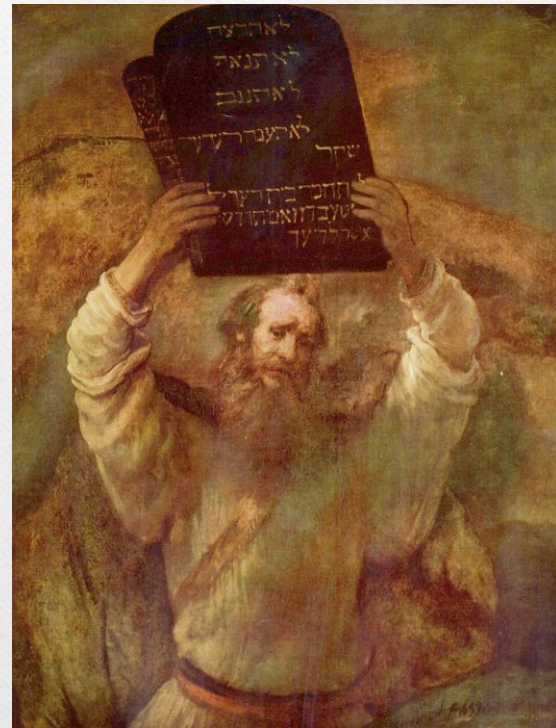
What bearing did the law have on the promise made to Abraham?

- ‘For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham, or to his seed...’ (4:13)
- ‘The law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not... make the promise of no effect’ (Gal. 3:17)
- God’s promise was made to Abraham ‘by (in virtue of his) righteousness of faith’



What bearing did the law have on the promise made to Abraham?

- If the promise had been conditional Abraham's faith would have been 'made vain' (empty; hollow. Not leading to the possession of anything) and
- The promise would be of no effect (it would be voided because one has to work for the reward)
- The law can only work wrath but the promise is made according to the principle of faith



Through grace the promise is sure to all the seed

- Because faith gives place to God's grace the promise is made sure to all the seed
- This secures the blessing not only for those Jewish believers who were under the law (like David)
- But for believing Gentiles as well (according as it is written, I have made thee father of many nations. Gen. 17:5)



The God that Abraham believed is the God who brings life out of death

- Abraham believed God when He promised he would become the father of many nations
- He believed in hope against hope because naturally speaking there was no hope
- But Abraham considered not his own body which as to its reproductive capacity was now dead
- Nor was the deadening of Sarah's womb an obstacle to his faith because
- He believed in the God 'who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being'

Abraham 'hesitated not at the promise of God'



- Abraham found inward strength (not bodily strength) through faith
- He gave glory to God who alone could accomplish the promise
- This conviction was the fruit of faith and his faith was reckoned as righteousness
- It was not written for his sake alone that it was reckoned to him!

It was not written for his sake alone that his faith was reckoned to him as righteousness

- This was written for our sake too since the same principle applies to the Christian believer
- Abraham believed on the God who raises the dead and we do too
- We believe on (have confidence in) Him who has raised from among [the] dead Jesus our Lord
- He was delivered for our offences (to make forgiveness righteous)
- And raised for our justification

‘Jesus our Lord... has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification’

- Sins are offensive to God and we are accountable to Him for them
- Our sins can only be forgiven because Christ once suffered for them
- The fact that He put them away forever is witnessed to by His resurrection
- God is so satisfied by Christ’s finished work that He raised Him from the dead

