

“Justified By Faith Alone”

Romans 4:1-16

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Teaching Aim: To illustrate the Old Testament saints were saved (or justified) in the same way as the New Testament saints, “*by grace through faith*” apart from the works of the law. To recognize Abraham and David believed God in the most difficult of circumstances; as a result, God accounted this to them for righteousness. To realize Abraham is “*the father of the faithful*,” meaning both believing Jews and believing Gentiles alike.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Two Old Testament examples of “*Justification by faith*” (Rom. 4:1-8)

1. Paul’s use of the word “*our*” in **verse 1** is significant, it reveals the people group Paul was writing to. To whom was Paul writing? According to Jewish law, the testimony of at least two witnesses was required for a verdict to be reached. What two Old Testament witnesses did Paul use to testify about “*justification by faith*?” (See **vv. 1 & 6**)

2. Immediately Paul began to illustrate that “*justification is by faith*” by using Abraham as his example. According to **verse 2**, did Abraham have the personal merit (or anyone else for that matter) to boast about his works before God? Why or why not? Have you ever known anyone who believes they can be saved by their own works? Who is the only One who fulfilled the law perfectly and has the merit to save us? (See **Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:3-4**)

3. In **verse 3**, Paul quotes from **Gen. 15:6** to illustrate the fact that Abram was “*justified by faith*” and not by his works. In the context, Abram (later called Abraham) had just returned from defeating the four kings who had captured Lot and taken captive the citizens of five cities along with their plunder. After Abram’s impressive military victory, Abram appeared uneasy, and we find God reassuring him not to fear. God told Abram that He will be “*his shield, his very great reward.*” Abram had one major request from God, he wanted a child, he desired to have an heir from his own flesh (**vs. 4**). In **verse 5**, God assured Abram he would not only have one child, but rather he would have many children along with a multitude of descendants. (See **Gen. 12:1-3**) It is at this point that we find Paul’s quote in **Gen. 15:6**, that says, Abram “*believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*” How do **Rom. 3:28 and Rom 4:3** fit into our salvation? Does this righteousness come by works, or by faith only?

4. When you are hired by an employer, is your employer obligated to pay you the promised salary for your services? Why or why not? How is the employer's obligation to pay different from the concept of grace? (See **Rom. 11:6**) How would you define the word "*grace*?" (See Dictionary) What can we learn about our salvation from the statement, "*We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone*?" (Also see **Eph. 2:8-9**)

5. According to **verse 5**, what is accounted to the person who does not work, but rather "*trusts God*?" Where does this righteousness come from that has been credited to them? (See **Rom. 10:4; Phil. 3:8-11**) Is there a difference between "*believing in God*" and "*believing God*?" If so, what is it? Do you have trouble "*believing God*" during the difficult times in your life? If so, why? What can we learn from **Rom. 8:28**?

6. Paul introduces witness #2 in **verse 6**, who is it? What are some of the terrible crimes that this king had committed during his lifetime? (See **2 Sam. 11**) What is the definition of the word "*impute*?" (See Dictionary) What does the theological phrase "*imputed righteousness*" mean and what makes this kind of righteousness so important to your salvation? What is the difference between "*imputed righteousness*" and "*imparted righteousness*?" Did David actually become righteous before being declared righteous, or was his righteousness a "*declared righteous*" that came from God because of his faith and trust in Him?

7. In **verses 7 & 8**, Paul quotes from **Psa. 32:1-2**. What made a sinner like David feel so blessed? Do you feel blessed for what Jesus has done for you?

Part II: Abraham was "*justified by faith*" before circumcision (Rom. 4:9-12)

1. In **verse 9** Paul asked the question, "*Is justification by faith alone for the Jews only, or does it apply to the Gentiles as well?*" Why would many Jews be offended at Paul's question?

2. **Verse 10** speaks of the timing that Abraham came to faith. Was Abraham declared righteous by God (**Gen. 15:6**) before he trusted God or afterward. Was Abraham declared righteous by the LORD before physical circumcision or after he was circumcised (**Gen. 17**)?
3. What is usually the purpose of a “*sign*?” What is the special significance of “*the sign of circumcision*” to the Jewish people (**vs. 11**)? (See **Gen. 17:9-11**) Which covenant is referred to in **Gen. 17:9-11**? What two additional promises were given to Abraham when “*the Abrahamic Covenant*” was reaffirmed in **Gen. 15:4-7**?
4. What do you think of when you hear the word “*sealed*” (**vs. 11**)? (See Dictionary) Who seals the Christian when he or she comes to faith in Jesus Christ? (See **Eph. 1:13-14**) When does this sealing occur? What is the Holy Spirit a guaranteed of in **Eph. 1:14**? In the case of the Jews, the sign of circumcision makes them a part of “*the covenant community*” of God’s chosen people. Does Christian baptism have any similarities to the Jewish rite of circumcision? If so, what is it? Have you obediently followed the Lord in water baptism? If not, why not? What is the significance of water baptism and why should every Christian be baptized? (See **Matt. 28:18-20**)
5. According to **verse 11**, is Abraham the father of the Jews only, or of all who believe in God? Does being a born-again Christian make you “*the seed of Abraham*?” (See **Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:26-29**) If you are a seed of Abraham, how should you live your life?
6. Abraham is “*the physical father*” of all Jewish people, but he is not “*the spiritual father*” of all Jewish people, only those who believe in the LORD. What is required for Abraham to become “*the spiritual father*” of the Gentiles? What is required for people today to be saved? (See **Acts 16:31**) How can we “*walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham*” today? Do you see yourself as walking in the faith, or do you find yourself questioning your trust in God? On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your current walk with God? What are some steps you can take to improve it?

Part III: God's promise to Abraham supersedes the law and is for all his seed (Rom. 4:13-16)

1. Did the promise of Abraham to be "*heir to the world*" come through the law or via faith (vs. 13)? Who will the promise to Abraham ultimately be fulfilled through? (See Gal. 3:16) What does the word "*righteousness*" mean to you? Why is the "*imputed righteousness*" of Jesus Christ absolutely necessary for our salvation?
2. According to **verse 14**, Paul demonstrated that if people can hypothetically be saved by the law, faith would mean nothing. However, people are not saved by following the law, the law only reveals our sin and points to our need for Jesus Christ. According to **verse 15**, what does the law bring? (See Rom. 2:5-6; 3:19-20). What can we expect the grace of God to bring? (See Tit. 3:5-7)
3. How would you define the word "*sin*?" (See Dictionary) How do the words "*sin*" and "*transgression*" relate? (See Dictionary) If **Matthew 22:36-39** is "*The Great Commandment*," what would be "*the great transgression*?" (Hint: Reverse the commandment.) Does there have to be law in order for a transgression (crossing over the line) to take place? But what if there is no law? (vs. 15)? (See Rom. 5:13-14)
4. How does the promise relate to God's grace (vs. 16)? Who is this promise guaranteed to? Martin Luther said, "*Justification by faith alone is the article upon which the Church stands or falls.*" According to **Eph. 2:8-9**, is our faith a gift from God or something we decide on our own? Can we possibly have assurance of salvation if our salvation is dependent upon how we feel at any given moment? Could you have assurance of salvation if you realize it was dependent upon God's promise and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross? Why is the second option a better one? (See **1 John 5:11-13; John 3:36**)

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Abraham believed God's promise, even when from a human perspective it seemed impossible; God accounted Abraham's faith for righteousness.
- David realized how blessed he was as a sinner to have his sins forgiven by God in His grace. Do you realize how blessed you are to have your sins forgiven in Christ?
- God's promise to Abraham in **Gen. 15:6** preceded both circumcision and the law.
- The salvation that comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone is available to all who put their trust in Him.
- Abraham is the father of the faithful, both believing Jews and believing Gentiles alike.

