

Romans Part 8 (4:1 - 4:13)

--INTRO:

--in chapter 4, Paul addresses further questions he knew the corrupt religious leaders of Israel would raise about the central theme of Romans...

--the central theme of Romans is justification based on "the righteousness of God **apart from the law**..." (Romans 3:21) being "credited" (Romans 4:6) as a "free gift" (Romans 5:16) to our account "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:22)

--"justification"... our entrance to heaven is *justified* because Christ died in our place for our sins and the righteous demands of the law are satisfied by His perfect righteousness being credited to our account

--the corrupt religious leaders taught justification based on achieving righteousness **through the law**

--they taught various forms of works righteousness, from following the entire law to circumcision alone being a security blanket

--example from Jewish literature: "Abraham sits before the gate of hell and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there" (*Akedath Jizehak*, fol. 7, col.2)

--these beliefs were so strongly rooted in the Jewish mindset that they became conflicts in the early church... Acts 15:1-2: "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question." [*Paul's inspired conviction that circumcision was no longer necessary was confirmed by the other apostles*]

--the corrupt religious leaders saw Abraham as the supreme example of a righteous person that was justified before God by their own good works. In Romans 4 Paul proves from the Old Testament that on the contrary Abraham's righteousness was not based on works but rather through faith – **the gospel of salvation through faith alone that the religious leaders vehemently rejected was not some new cultic idea but was the very foundation of the first and foremost patriarch of Israel 2,000 years earlier!**

--*By using Abraham as the supreme scriptural example of justification, or salvation, by faith alone, Paul was storming the very citadel of traditional Judaism. By demonstrating that Abraham was not justified by works, the apostle demolished the foundation of rabbinical teaching...* (John MacArthur commentary on Romans, pg. 233)

--so in many ways Romans 4 is simply a study guide to the Old Testament about Abraham's justification by faith... following the introduction of the theme of salvation by faith in Romans 1 where Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4: "the just shall live by faith."

--the corrupt religious leaders based their teaching on traditions that distorted Scripture, but Paul based his teachings on Scripture alone:

--when Paul stood on trial before governor Felix after being falsely accused by the religious leaders, he explained that they "[could not] prove the things of which they now accuse me [*just like they couldn't prove from Scripture their legalistic traditions...*]. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, **believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets** [*the Old Testament*]." (Acts 24:13-14)

--standing before King Agrippa, Paul explained, "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews." (Acts 26:6-7)

--while under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar, "many came to him [*Paul*] at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, **persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets**, from morning till evening. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved." (Acts 28:23-24)

--unlike the corrupt religious leaders, the Bereans "searched the Scriptures [*the Old Testament*] daily to find out whether these things [*what Paul taught*] were so [*whether the Old Testament truly backed up what Paul was teaching*]. Therefore many of them believed... [*because what Paul taught was true, according to Old Testament Scripture*]" (Acts 17:11-12)

--classic example of Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by Christ: Isaiah 53

--for further examples refer to online article at www.lettersofchrist.com/bible_prophecy.htm

--Romans 4:1-8: in these verses Paul presents two Old Testament proof texts about Abraham being justified by faith apart from works

**note: the wording of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament are slightly different from our Old Testament because the New Testament writers often quoted from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (the *Septuagint*) while the Old Testament in our Bibles is translated directly from Hebrew.

--in Romans 4:3 Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6 as the first proof text: "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" (NIV)

--Genesis 12:1-14:24: overview of events in Abraham's life that led to God's declaration that Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness."

--**12:1-4** is the first record of God speaking to Abraham: "Now the Lord had said to Abram [*God later changed his name to Abraham*] 'Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him..." [Lot wasn't supposed to go with him]

**God did not say *because you are righteous I will make you a great nation...*, as the religious leaders wanted to believe. Nowhere in Scripture does it say why God chose Abram. The only thing Abram demonstrated was faith in what God revealed to him and faith that resulted in action, as it points out in Hebrews: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going..." (Hebrews 11:8)

--12:4-9: Abram journeyed through Canaan where "the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.'" (12:7)

--12:10-20: because of a famine in the land of Canaan they journeyed south to Egypt where Abram ran into trouble with Pharaoh.

--13:1-13:13: then Abram returned to Canaan and separated from Lot because of strife between them and their herdsmen.

--**13:14-17**: "And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are — northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.'"

**again, God did not say *because you are righteous, I will give you this land*.

--14:1-17: Abram rescues Lot from a military conflict and encounters Melchizedek

--**15:1-6**: "Genesis 15:1-6: "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, 'O 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 coming from your own body will be your heir.' 5 He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens 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.**"

--in Romans 4:4-8 Paul quotes from Psalms 32:1 as the second proof text: "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'"

--Romans 4:9-13: in these verses Paul adds further evidence that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works by explaining that the key event in Genesis 15:6 occurred before the law and before circumcision

--Abraham was declared righteous at least 14 years before God instituted circumcision (circumcision instituted when Ishmael was 13 and Abram was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6 before Ishmael was conceived) and 500 years before the law of Moses

--therefore Paul writes in Romans 4:13, "For the promise that he would be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but **through the righteousness of faith.**"

--Genesis 15:7-21: after Abram was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6, God said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." Then Abram said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" Then God commanded Abram to setup a special animal sacrifice that served as a ratification ceremony for His covenant with Abram. The animal sacrifices were cut in half and placed side by side with a pathway down the middle. In traditional ceremony, both parties involved would walk down the middle together, ratifying the covenant and signifying that both were responsible for the fulfillment of the covenant. In God's covenant with Abram, however, God caused Abram to fall asleep and then God appeared as a "burning torch that passed between those pieces", signifying that fulfillment of the covenant was dependent on God alone and not Abram.

--in Genesis 17 God commands Abram to institute circumcision as a sign of the unconditional covenant that He made with him over 14 years earlier.

--therefore Paul writes in Romans 4:9-11: "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 the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.**"

--righteousness of God apart from the law for Abraham was predicated on Christ, even though Christ had not yet died for our sins... we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world...**" (1 Peter 1:19-20)

--genuine faith results in obedience...

--because Abraham's faith was genuine there was a pattern of obedience in his life, but he wasn't perfectly obedient and at times his faith wavered as he struggled with doubt...

--in his old age he grew impatient with God's promise to give him a son and took matters into his own hands by bearing a son, Ishmael, through Hagar. Later when God appeared to Abram and told him again that his wife Sarah would bear him the son that would be his heir to fulfill the promise, Abram wavered in his faith and told God that he wanted Ishmael to be his heir (Genesis 17:17-18); but God replied, "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him..." (Genesis 17:19)

--James speaks of the importance of obedience by stating that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20) and then goes on to use Abraham as an example of one whose faith was proven to be genuine by what he did, opposed to what he said (James 2:21-24).

--Genuine faith is not just a mental acknowledgment, but it is something that affects every part of our life; it is something that we live by – hence, in Paul's introduction in Romans 1 he quotes Habakkuk 2:4: "the just shall live by faith."