



Romans 4:1-25

THE WALK OF FAITH

In the previous 3 chapters, Paul presented his case that God declares every person Jew & Gentile, righteous based on faith instead of works. He now seeks to illustrate this fact in Chapter 4 by using Abraham and David as examples. The Jews revered Abraham as their father and David as their most favoured king.

1-8 Abraham was their father according to the flesh; this no doubt is in reference to their ancestry as Jews. The term forefather is only used once in the New Testament original text. The old Rabbis taught that Abraham had a surplus of good works and that these merits were passed on to his descendants. Paul uses this argument and asserts that such boasting could be made before man but not before God. Paul then refers to the only reliable source of authority, the Scriptures. **Genesis 15:6** states that righteousness was credited to Abraham through faith. He points out that a wage or salary is paid to someone who has worked for it. **Righteousness is a gift not a reward.** You can't earn it but you can receive it through faith. Ungodly sinners who trust in God receive salvation instantly.

David who sinned against God, his family and himself received pardon, not through works but faith. (**Psalm 32:1-2**). God forgave David and covered his sin. Every believer needs to accept through simple trust that Christ paid the penalty for sin and embrace the spiritual reality that he or she no longer needs to bargain, beg, plead, agonise or sacrifice to receive the gift of salvation. Accept Christ's merits and know that the debt of sin is cancelled. Praise God, it's settled.

*Blessed is he whose
transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom
the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit
there is no guile.
Psalm 32:1-2*

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9-10 Every Jewish male, on the eight day after birth, was circumcised as a physical mark of being part of a covenant with God. (**Gen. 17:9-12**). The Jew thought that their ritual of works and obedience gained them favour over Gentiles. Paul points out that Abraham received God's pardon before he was circumcised. Abraham was 99 years of age when circumcised. (**Gen 17:24**) Paul argues that circumcision was a sign or outward token of someone already pardoned. However a person who observes the right is not guaranteed salvation. In a modern context, many saved people who are baptised are not saved after baptism but before baptism. The ritual of baptism could not wash away sin – it was a demonstration or token of their faith. As Gentiles in New Testament times were not required to be circumcised after salvation, so believers today are under no obligation to be baptised. Just like the Jews trusted in circumcision as a status, so believers in these modern times falsely think that their baptism “scores extra points” with God. (*Baptism was integral to the expected arrival of the Kingdom of God to earth, the subsequent postponement of the Kingdom rendered baptism redundant in precisely the same way that circumcision was not imposed on Gentile believers in the New Testament.*)

Genesis 17:24-26

Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁵ And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. ²⁶ In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

11-13 If Abraham received justification through faith before he was circumcised then he is not only the father of Jews in the flesh but the father of all who believe by faith. This does not imply that Jews lose their earthly inheritance but that both Jew and Gentiles through faith become one in Christ.

14-15 If Jews could become heirs by obeying the law then faith has no value. The promise is empty, void or worthless. The reason for this is that the law brings wrath and death not grace and life. No one can keep the whole law fully. The law is designed to reveal man's depravity and need of a saviour.

16 The Promise comes through faith so that it may be by Grace. If the promise came through the law then the Gentiles could not receive salvation. But this cannot be, because Abraham is the father of all who believe.

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17 In God's sight, Abraham is the father of all who believe because he is the father (Pater or Source of us all) of faith. The fact that believers in this church age are identified with Abraham's faith does not mean that they share in the physical blessing of National Israel.

18-19 Against impossible odds, Abraham became father of many (The name Abraham means "Father of Many").

20-21 Unbelief is a divided opinion – a wavering between accepting and rejecting. Abraham believed God (totally persuaded and convinced that God would honour His word) for the promise.

22 Such faith in God is credited with righteousness.

23-24 God's Divine declaration of Abraham's justification is not recorded for Abraham's sake only but to all who believe and through faith accept God's Gift of Grace and eternal life.

25 Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, places the emphasis on Christ's sacrificial death and not on human effort or works. Jesus paid the penalty for our trespasses (false steps or human endeavours). Our response in faith to the Lamb of God's sacrifice for our sin is an acceptance of God's promise to us.

NOTES:

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SUMMARY

Several reasons for justification through faith

1. Justification is a gift it cannot be bought through human effort.
2. Since Abraham was justified centuries before the Mosaic Law, Justification cannot be earned through the keeping of the law.
3. Abraham became justified through faith and you and I may receive this same gift through trust or faith.

“For by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God.”
Ephesians 2:8

Faith is no Blind Leap - Faith is being totally convinced (persuaded by the evidence that God is trustworthy and reliable to keep His promise.

Are you persuaded or do you still waver?

DISCUSS

Consider Acts 26:27-29:

²⁸ Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” ²⁹ And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

- Acts 26:28-29