

## St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

Almighty God you have brought us to the beginning of this new day; preserve us with thy mighty power that we may not all into any sin, nor be overcome by any adversity, but that all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, may be accepted in thy sight through Jesus Christ our Lord who live and reigns with thee and the Holy Ghost one God now and forever.

AMEN

### Introduction to Romans Chapter Four

#### I. The Character of Abraham

A. Paul "allows" the gentiles to hear and come to understand the person of Abraham

B. Jewish perspective on Abraham

1. Father of the Covenant
2. Key to Jewish Identity
3. The source of hope in the future

C. Paul will introduce the Scriptural witness for his Presentation of Abraham

D. Paul's View

1. Abram is person of Faith
2. The covenant is made with the uncircumcised Abram
3. God made promised to Abraham
  - a. A Son – who is Abraham's son?
  - b. The Land – Canaan?

**The question become's who is the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham?**

## Romans 4:1-12

What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin." Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

### I. Abraham

#### A. According to the Jews

1. Flesh – forefather familial relationship
2. Adherence to the Law

#### B. Paul's redefining

1. Paul asks, What did Abraham find?
  - a. Jewish view: Abraham found acceptance from God based on his acceptance of the Law and following that Law.
  - b. Paul's View: Abraham, a man of faith, believed and his faith allowed him to conform his life to what God revealed to him. The faith was before the Law or acceptance of the Law.
2. Proof of Paul's thesis – Note the homiletic aspect of this passage

a. First Scriptural proof

Genesis 15: 1-6

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Elie'zer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.** And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chalde'ans, to give you this land to possess."

**Abram believed! Not Abraham who was circumcised and had entered into the covenant but Abram a gentile.**

b. The preacher now shifts to a practical example

1. The wages of a worker – due because of work
2. Wages given without work gift

Note the circularity of Paul's Argument vs. the linear thinking of the Jews. Jews equate being Jewish to having the law to being God's People which will lead to Salvation.

Paul suggests a non- linear approach. Knowing God, a free gift from God is an awareness of Him, which leads to

c. Scriptural Proof 2 – Psalm 32:1-5

As an interesting note: We sometimes talk about Paul and declare so conclusively how they were taught and by whom (some of this information comes from Paul's own declations) but here we have an interesting example of why we know that Paul followed the teachings of Rabbi Hillel. The analysis of psalm follows the second rule of Hillel .

**Paul teaches that those who have acknowledged their sin and so have not suffered for their sin, but have been forgiven.**

Psalm 32:1-5

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

#### d. Scriptural Proof 3 - Genesis 15:6a

##### 1. The Blessing of Abram

2. Abram is blessed before he was circumcised "By Faith" so the connection between circumcision and salvation is null

#### II. Conclusion:

The Fatherhood of Abraham is radically transformed by Paul. Genetics are not important. The Law is important only as God's Divine Law not as a possession of a people and Finally Paul identifies Abram as Semite for sure, but a Gentile who become righteous before God.

Roman 4:13-25

The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants -- not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" -- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, "So shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what

he had promised. That is why his faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness." But the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

#### I. The Promise is tied to Faith

A. God's Promise to Abraham is by Faith and to His seed forever.

B. Righteousness leads to Salvation

C. Paul will next have to separate faithfulness and blind obedience

#### II. Righteousness by Faith and Righteousness of the Law are mutually exclusive

A. Faithfulness to the Law is empty - the promise of the Law is abolished

B. Faithfulness to the Law Giver is rewarded by Grace

#### III. Faith secures salvation for all

A. Abraham is Father of the Faithful, Jewish or Not

B. Faith is the result of the acceptance of unmerited Grace

1. This is the fulfillment of the Son/Seed promise

2. Sonship is achieved not by heredity but by faithfulness

#### IV. The Faith of Abraham

A. God to Abraham is one who makes out of nothing – "As good As dead body"

B. The deadness of Abraham outer body is contrasted to the living faith inside

Note: the prayer for the dying: "that as the outer man decayeth so ma the inner man be strengthened unto eternal life."

C. By being faithful, trusting Abraham gives Glory to God vs. the Boasting of those who have the Law

D. Abraham's actions (Works) follow the Covenant, the Law not because he worships the Law or trusts in it, but because it is the way a faithful man orders his life.

V. Abraham as the first of many faithful saved by Faith

A. Paul notes that the faith of Abraham perseveres this is an attribute of the faithful man

B. He ends this passage by connecting faith in God with the salvific acts of Jesus