

BIBLE STUDY OF ROMANS (12)

ROMANS 4:1-8

INTRODUCTION

Paul continued to illustrate and prove the Gospel method of justification by faith without works. In this chapter he did this by quoting from the Old Testament. Behind this chapter lurked the objection of the Jews who countered Paul's teaching. They might have said, "You are departing from the old truth! This is not what our fathers have always taught us."

Paul showed them how that the fathers actually did teach this. Even their national heroes (Moses writing about Abraham and David) taught exactly the same. We are saved by faith only and not on account of any of our works.

Outline:

- I. Justification of Abraham and David as examples and testimonies to 'justification by faith apart from works.' (1-8)
 - A. How Abraham was justified without works by faith alone (1-5)
 - B. David's testimony supports the salvation through faith (6-8)

- II. Righteousness by faith is available to all believers (9-25)
 - A. Because Abraham was justified before circumcision (9-12)
 - B. Because the promise to Abraham and to his (spiritual) descendants (all true believers) was always granted through faith (13-17)
 - C. Abraham's faith illustrates the gospel method of justification by faith (18-25)

Words and Definitions

- a. **justified:** *to declare someone innocent or acquitted from charges*
- b. **glory:** *boast*
- c. **counted unto – imputed:** *to reckon, consider, take into account, to charge or to put down to a person's account*

To impute something to a person means to set it to his account or to number it among the things that personally belong to him. When something is imputed to a person, it is legally his. It is counted as his possession. This can either be a good or bad deed. When God is said to 'impute Adam's sin' to us, the meaning is that God accounts us to be a sinner and as result we are guilty and liable to punishment. Similarly, when God is said to 'impute Christ's righteousness to a sinner' He judicially accounts such a one to be righteous, and entitled to all the rewards of a righteous person. When God imputed to Jesus the sins of His people, their sins became legally His.
- d. **righteousness:** *depending on the context, refers to*
 - **either** the righteousness of God as a reference to His attribute of justice (Rom. 3:5, 25, 26)
 - **or** the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to all who believe in the Son (1:17; 3:21, 22; 10:3). This righteousness is apart from our works (Rom. 3:38; 4:1-8; 23-25); it is not our own (Phil. 3:9), it is the gift of God (Rom. 5:17) and it received by faith (Rom. 1:17). In 1 Cor. 1:30 Paul speaks of Christ as being made 'our righteousness.'
- e. **iniquities:** *literally 'lawlessness' shown in defiant acts of transgressions*
- f. **sins:** *literally 'missing of the mark' referring to condition of sinfulness of the heart*

Discussion Questions:

Without a thorough understanding of the audience point of view or thinking, we can miss the impact of a certain passage. This hermeneutical principle applies really well in this passage. Paul knew *how* his Jewish audience considered the great father of their nation, Abraham.

Take a moment to read these short notes about the rabbinical teaching about Abraham.

a. Jewish teachers considered Abraham the only righteous man of his generation and they held that **because of that**, he was chosen to be their ancestor. They stated, “We find that Abraham our father had performed the whole law before it was given.”

b. They believed that he began to serve God as age of three and that his righteousness was made complete by his circumcision and his obedience to the law even the law was not given.

c. In the apocryphal book, *The Prayer of Manasseh*, you can read in vs. 8 “Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who did not sin against thee, but thou hast appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.”

d. Another Jewish book, *The Book of Jubilee* (200BC) states that Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the LORD, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life

e. Jewish teachers referred to Gen. 15:6 as follows: *Our father Abraham became the heir of this and the coming world simply by the merit of the faith with which he believed in the Lord.*”

1. What is the intention of the question in vs. 1? In other words, where is Paul going with this question?
2. What makes Abraham such a unique example to illustrate the teaching of justification by faith?
3. What did Abraham now actually believe to be justified before God? Was he actually the first one to be justified as this is the first time Genesis mentions it?
4. Incidentally, what doctrine is taught in the phrase, “For what saith the Scripture ...” (3a)?
5. In your own words, what is the point taught in vs. 4-5?
6. Comment on this reflection on vs. 5, “Before any man is united by faith to Christ, he or she is considered ungodly, even though outwardly such could be admirable in conduct.”

7. What is the liberating Gospel message in vs. 5-7?

8. Paul illustrated that also David was ultimately saved by faith. He cited Ps. 32:1-2 to show that the doctrine of imputation of righteousness upon faith is really the old truth! Are the statements in vs. 7 similar? In other words, do they say the same but in different words? Or are they two separate benefits believers in Christ receive?

9. How much conviction of sin, repentance and faith are necessary to be justified?

10. How would you counsel someone who struggles to believe the truth of their justification because their faith is so weak?