

BIBLE STUDY OF ROMANS (13)

ROMANS 4:9-25

This chapter is a "case study" to illustrate that the teaching about justification *by faith* is not a new doctrine. Paul has emphasized that for both Jew and Gentile, there is only one way of salvation--by grace, through faith, not by works of the law. Further, he has stated that circumcision has value only as an outward sign of an inward faith. Paul now makes these doctrines concrete by applying them to one of the central characters in Judaism: Abraham, the father of the race. If Paul can show that even Abraham was justified by faith, then his point is proven.

With great skill, Paul proves that Abraham is the father of all who believe, whether Jew (circumcised) or Gentile (uncircumcised). This fact is enormously significant for it opens the hope of the Gospel to all who hear its message.

(9-12) ABRAHAM WAS COUNTED RIGHTEOUS BEFORE HE WAS CIRCUMCISED; THEREFORE HE WAS NOT COUNTED RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE HE WAS CIRCUMCISED.

(13-25) GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM WAS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH, NOT LAW OR WORKS.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Making good questions is tougher than it appears. It also may not cover a particular question others may have about the text. So, as a trial, everyone is invited to provide one additional question on verses 9-17. It can be simply the question 'What exactly does so and so mean?' Or it can be a question that is suggested by your thoughts in relation to what you read. Before we begin our next study, you will be asked to share your question. If you cannot think of a question, then at least you have tried.

1. What conclusion are we to draw about the thinking many Jews had that circumcision was necessary to salvation? It is possible that other 'necessities' may exist in our minds regarding salvation, which aren't specified or commanded in the Scripture. What are the common ones?
2. What was the purpose or function of Abraham's circumcision? What was its relationship to his comfort of salvation? Are we supposed to experience our baptism in a similar way? Can you share how baptism may have strengthened you in your faith?
3. To claim Abraham as 'our father' isn't based on blood line but 'when we also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.' What is the meaning of 'walking in the steps of that faith?'
4. Why did Paul describe God with the phrase in vs. 17, "...who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."
5. In vs. 17-22 much is said about faith. It speaks above the object, content, the accompaniment, struggle, victory and the fruit of faith. Can you illustrate each of these

aspects of faith from these verses? Are there other aspects of faith you observed?

6. Faith always needs to have a ground to rest on. What 'ground' did Abraham have to be persuaded to believe God's amazing promise?
7. Paul is referring to Abraham as an example of a believer in a promise that fell outside the realm of his experience (Sarah's womb was dead). We need to remember that he quoted this example to strengthen *us* in our faith in justification by faith in Jesus (see his conclusion in vs. 23-25). In that context, what are some common 'sense or reason objections' to the message of the Gospel of justification by faith only? How will Abraham's example help us in our struggles to believe that we are justified by faith only?
8. John Owen wrote, "The great honor of Abraham's faith lay in this, that deaths and difficulties lay in the way of the fulfilment of the promise, and yet he trusted in God." In other words, the way to the fulfilment to the promise of God stood on the other side of impossibility. His eyes of faith therefore were resting on God who stands far above all impossibility.
Yet the faith that God requires of us sinners regarding our salvation is even greater because sinners aren't only to believe God is able to overcome cross-providences but able to pardon a guilty man who deserves nothing less than hell and still feels a sinner. Owen commented, "But what is a dead body, and a dead womb, compared with an accusing conscience, a killing law, and apprehensions of a God as a consuming fire? All of which oppose themselves to a call called to believe in forgiveness."

How are you helped or how can you help others who struggle with the fears and doubts as described in the words of Owen?