

Romans Chapter 4
New American Standard Bible®

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Romans, Chapter 4

Justification by Faith Evidenced in Old Testament

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Did Abraham find self justification? Was Abraham justified by his works? The answer is simple, regardless of what he was, Abraham was not justified (found to be just) before God. Instead, God looked at Abraham's belief and gave him credit for that belief as righteousness (Made right with God on the basis of belief in God).

⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

We could work for justification and if we were god enough (as Jesus said – better than even the scribes Pharisees) we could credit our justification as being due to us. That simply is not going to happen – we are not capable of such goodness to claim our works as righteousness.

⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. ⁸"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

David was forgiven not on the basis of his works, but on the basis of the grace of God. He knew how blessed is the one who's lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. He knew firsthand how it feels when the Lord does not take sin into account.

⁹Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ¹⁰How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

If one considers the mark of circumcision as Jewishness, then Abraham was not a Jew when he was declared righteous before God. Circumcision came after righteousness.

¹¹and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

Abraham's faith came before his mark as a Jew so that he could also be the first of many believers who are declared righteous even though they are not Jewish.

¹²and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. ¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

He is the father of circumcision (Jews). He is also the father of all who follow in faith who are not Jews. His fatherhood to the world was based on faith and not on the law.

¹⁴For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

If law makes us heirs of righteousness, then what good does faith (belief) serve and why was Abraham declared righteous (because he did not have the law, only his belief)? He did not have the Law, only his belief.

¹⁶For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

We are also descendants of Abraham – because of faith – in accordance with grace, not because of the Law.

¹⁷(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." ¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. ²²Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Abraham was old when he had his encounter of faith with God. Still he had faith and so gloried in God. He lived with full assurance that God would do as He said – That what he promised, He would do.

²³Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Why is Abraham important? His faith being accorded as righteousness also applies to us. Our faith that God raised Jesus up from the dead is the same faith that Abraham had when he believed God would bring him a son through Sarah.

And so our reconciliation with God is – based on our faith that God will do (is doing) what he said he would do. Jesus paid for sin with his blood (Lamb of God), died and was raised from the dead by his father, so that we might be declared righteous and justified through our faith and belief.