

ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR : RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

Read Romans chapter 4 in its entirety.

At the end of chapter 3, the apostle Paul presents the truth that we are justified and made righteous by faith, without the works of the law. And this is available to all who will have faith in Jesus Christ, Jew or Gentile. As we progress now in chapter 4, Paul points to two Old Testament examples (Abraham and David) to show that righteousness by faith was indeed present in the Old Testament, and was something experienced even before the law, and apart from the law. He emphasizes that all who walk in faith are the ones who have righteousness accounted to them.

We are also given insight into the faith of Abraham and how God helped him come to the place where Abraham could possess what was promised.

Abraham - Righteousness by faith

Romans 4:1-3

1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

vs 1,Abraham our father.....

(GNB) What shall we say, then, of Abraham, the father of our race? What was his experience?

Paul points to the man considered very important by the Jews, in fact the originator of the entire Jewish people. The Jews were very proud of their ancestry, tracing this all the way back to Abraham. They made their boast 'We have Abraham as our father.' (Luke 3:8). The Lord Jesus recognized this in His teaching (John 8:33,39). We see Peter recognizing and addressing the importance of Abraham to the Jewish people as he preached the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 3:13,25). Stephen did the same (Acts 7:2). Paul did this as well during his missionary journeys when he preached in the Synagogues (Acts 13:22,26).

Paul points out from the Old Testament Scripture that Abraham was not justified by works. (Even IF he was, he would have had something to boast about and yet he could not do so before God).

Genesis 15:5-6

5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

The Greek word for "accounted" (Greek "logizomai", Strongs G3049) that Paul uses in Romans 4:3 is an important word to consider. Paul uses this word 11 times in this same chapter. In the

NKJV it is translated as **accounted** (Vs 3,5,9,10,22), **counted** (Vs 4), **imputes, impute, imputed** (Vs 6,8,11,23,24). In the KJV translated this is translated as counted, **reckoned**, imputed. This is a word having to do with financial/accounting calculation and it simply means to put down to one's account. In our usage we would say to credit to one's account, or to deposit into one's account. Abraham believed God and God deposited to Him (or credited to him, accounted to him) righteousness. So Abraham received righteousness by believing God.

As an aside, we must point out that Abraham was not perfect. He was born of Adam's race and was a sinner. Even after receiving righteousness (in Genesis 15), Abraham sinned. We have some on record, for instance, he still did something out of unbelief by having Ishmael through Hagar (Genesis 16), or lying about Sarah to Abimelech (Genesis 20). Yet he did not give up his faith in God even though he made mistakes. Therefore, what he had received, righteousness by faith, was never withdrawn even though he did wrong.

David - Righteousness by faith

Romans 4:4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

Romans 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Romans 4:6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

Romans 4:7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED;

Romans 4:8 BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD SHALL NOT IMPUTE SIN."

vs 4, if a man does work, then what he earns is something owed to him and cannot be considered "as grace". The Greek word for grace is "charis" and has different usages in the New Testament. In this context it refers to **(A)divine favor**, a generous deed, done out of the heart of the bestower without expectation of anything in return. We often use the phrase "unmerited favor". Grace is us receiving what we do not deserve and what we cannot earn. Grace is God doing for us and through us, what we could never do for ourselves. Grace begins where our ability ends. Someone explained it as an acronym: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

NOTE: Keep in mind that 'charis' is used in other places to refer to **(B)divine character** or **(C)divine empowering** or gifting. So 'charis' (i.e. grace) has to be interpreted correctly depending on the context.

vs 5, the man who receives something he does not work for, receives it because of grace. In this case **righteousness** is received because of God's **grace** through **faith**. Righteousness is the gift, it is God's grace that releases it to us, and it is faith that receives it.

Consider the phrase "...Him who justifies the ungodly..."

This is powerful, and even sounds paradoxical, God declaring the ungodly as righteous! Yet, God can do this because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as we saw earlier in chapter 3.

vs 6. The next man Paul points to is David. David was also highly regarded by the Jews, along with Abraham. To highlight the great importance of these two Patriarchs to the Jews, consider how Mathew begins his gospel:

Matthew 1:1,17

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

David and Abraham, the two most important of the Patriarchs for the Jews. Their entire history is built around these two men. So Paul does well now to point to David, after having addressed Abraham.

Paul quotes the first two verses from Psalm 32. We look at additional verses to understand context.

Psalm 32:1-5

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

2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Paul points out that even David received this righteousness apart from works. He confessed and by faith he received righteousness.

Consider the phrase "...the blessedness...." of the man whom God declares righteous (or credits with righteousness). Being declared righteous brings us into this place of blessedness, blessings that cannot be received any other means or any other place.

Righteousness given by faith even before circumcision

Romans 4:9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

Romans 4:10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

Romans 4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

Having established from the Old Testament examples of righteousness given based on faith (or simply believing), Paul then addresses the question of circumcision. Was this righteousness given because of circumcision? Paul points to Abraham who received righteousness by faith (Genesis 15:6) before he received the sign of circumcision (Genesis 17:10). Circumcision was given 'after the fact'. It was given as a seal (a stamp, inscription, or impression by which something is confirmed, proved or authenticated) of something (righteousness) he already received by faith, while he was still uncircumcised.

So Abraham is "the father" (a very important term) of all who believe. "Believing" is what connects people to Abraham. And all who believe, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, will receive righteousness by faith.

vs 12, Abraham is the father of circumcision (the Jews) who do not just have the ritual of circumcision done on them, but who also have the same faith that Abraham had. Implying that without this faith, circumcision itself would not bring righteousness.

Consider the phrase "...walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had..."

...live the same life of faith...(GNB)

...live following the faith that our father Abraham had...(ERV)

...walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had...(ESV)

All of us, circumcised or uncircumcised are to follow the faith that Abraham had.

Promise Based on faith because of grace

Romans 4:13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 4:14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,

Romans 4:15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, 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

vs 13, Now Paul points to the Genesis 12:1-3 promise that God had given Abraham, that through him all the families in the earth would be blessed. This promise was given before and apart from the law. It was through the righteousness of faith.

vs 14, If only those who are of the law (the Jews) are heirs, then there is no need for faith, and also the promise is useless, because the promise included all the families of the earth.

vs 15, The law only resulted in people coming under God's judgment for failure to keep it. And therefore people would never be able to come into righteousness as Abraham did and would

never be able to be part of this promise given to Abraham, if it was to be obtained through the keeping of the law.

"Where there is no law there is no transgression", How do we understand this?

There are different words used for wrongdoing:

sin = which means missing the mark or falling short

transgression = which means crossing the line you are not supposed to cross, overstepping a boundary.

iniquity = which refers primarily to the propensity or inclination to do wrong

offenses = a slip or fall, a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness, could be unintentional or willful

While in general, all these may be used interchangeably to refer to wrong doing before God or man, in vs 15, Paul is stating that without the law, there is no awareness of the line that should not be crossed (referring to the law) and therefore no violation of the law, per se. This however does not mean that there is no sin or iniquity, or offenses, since we are all under sin, as already proved in chapter 3.

Romans 4:16

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, 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

vs 16, then is the conclusion of this matter, that it is of faith, by grace, that the promise would include everyone, all who walk in the faith of Abraham. And then the big statement that "Abraham is the father of us all", a statement that would have shocked the Jews who took so much pride in having Abraham as their father.

Consider the key words and their interplay in God's working in our lives: faith, grace, righteousness, promise.

faith - our believing God, trusting in Him

grace - God's delivery mechanism, how God gives into our lives, purely by His grace

righteousness - a gift from God given to us that makes us right before Him

promise - an expression of what God desires to do for us and through us to carry out His purposes

All of us engage with God in this manner.

In the next few verses, Paul gives us revelation on how Abraham engaged with God, in faith, by His grace, having received righteousness, to see the promise of God given to him, come to pass. This is insight into the steps of the faith Abraham had, or the life of faith Abraham lived, as seen through the eyes of God.

The steps of the faith of Abraham

Romans 4:17 (as it is written, "I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

Romans 4:18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

Romans 4:19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Romans 4:20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

Romans 4:21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

vs 17, looking at God and who He is

He is the Giver of the promise

He is the One Abraham stood before and whom Abraham believed

He is the One who gives life to the dead - referring to Abraham and Sarah's bodies, barren, old.

He is the One who calls things that do not exist as though they did - referring to calling them father of a nation, when they had no children.

Often, this is how God steps into our situations. He gives us a promise, He invites us to stand before Him and believe. He promise could address a situation that we consider dead and gone, and non-existent. But His promises breathes life and calls into being what is non-existent.

How do we go about believing? How did Abraham go about this?

vs 18, against all hope, he still believed in hope

Hope is very important. Hope is first of all having an expectation. It is the ability to see a desired outcome which may still be in the future, still invisible, still intangible. But you can hope for it.

Without hope, we cannot have faith. We cannot believe.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

vs 19, he did not let his faith be weakened by the facts

Abraham knew the facts. He was not ignorant about the condition of his body, and that of Sarah's. However, he did not let his faith be dictated by the facts. His faith was based on the Word God has spoken.

vs 20, he did not waver on God's promise through unbelief

Unbelief surely came knocking at his door numerous times. In fact Abraham asked God 'how can this be', or he offered God an idea on how to go about fulfilling this promise, etc. But Abraham came back on track and walked with God the way God wanted him to walk.

Remember you can have doubts in your head, while faith is in your heart.

The key is not to cast off the faith, the believing in your heart.

vs 20, he became strong in faith as he gave glory to God

We all need to be strengthened in faith.

We can be strengthened in faith as we stay focused on His Word and give praise to God.

vs 21, he was fully convinced that God will do what He had promised

This was a journey that Abraham made, not a switch he flipped.

It took time, before Abraham came to this place of faith, but he finally did arrive at this place in faith of being fully convinced.

Now we have to follow this example of faith in our walk with God.

I tried and failed, so this won't work for me?

Many of us may have tried to follow Abraham's faith and failed on one or more occasions.

Consider two things: First, Abraham himself was not perfect and flawless in his walk of faith. He made mistakes, as we have pointed out earlier. Yet, he got back into God's plan and kept going. Second, consider a child learning to walk. The child will need support initially. There will definitely be a few falls, maybe some bruises. But the child gets up and keeps going, until the child walks freely. Therefore, don't give up if you have experienced failure in attempting to walk by faith. Get up. Walk again. Walk in the steps of the faith that Abraham had.

Righteousness by faith in Jesus

Romans 4:22 And therefore "IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Romans 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,

Romans 4:24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

Romans 4:25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Now we get back to the main topic, that righteousness is by faith and that this is given to all who believe in Jesus Christ, in who He is and what He did for us through His death, burial and resurrection.

vs 25, is powerful

"...delivered up because of our offenses.."

"delivered" in Greek is "paradidomi" and was used of handing over people into prison, delivering them to justice, or judicial custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, put to death. Jesus was delivered up (in one sense pronounce guilty) because of our offenses

"...was raised up because of our justification"

The work was completed. We were declared righteous. We were justified. We were pronounced righteous, and then Christ was raised up.

He was identified with us (He pronounced guilty because of our offenses) and we were identified with Him (we were pronounced righteous and He was raised up) in the process of His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. This is an important truth in Paul's epistles and Paul will elaborate on this in the coming chapters.

Reflection



Q1, We highlighted a few key words: faith, grace, righteousness, promise as seen in this chapter, as part of God's working in our lives. Review how these are at work in your own life? What are some promises God is speaking to you about presently?

Q2, We highlighted six aspects of Abraham's faith-walk. Review these considering how we would personally walk with God to see one or more of His promises to us fulfilled

vs 17, looking at God and who He is

vs 18, against all hope, he still believed in hope

vs 19, he did not let his faith be weakened by the facts

vs 20, he did not waver on God's promise through unbelief

vs 20, he became strong in faith as he gave glory to God

vs 21, he was fully convinced that God will do what He had promised

Q3, Discuss "identification", Christ being identified with us, and we being identified with Him, in His death, burial and resurrection, as presented to us in Romans 4:25.

ROMANS CHAPTER FIVE : GRACE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Read Romans chapter 5 in its entirety.

Having Been Justified, We Have...

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Romans 5:2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
Romans 5:3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
Romans 5:4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Four outcomes of being justified mentioned here:

1. **peace with God** - we are at one with God. We are reconciled to God. (A)God is not our enemy. We are not fighting God. (B)Only when we have peace with God can we have the peace of God.
2. access by faith into **a standing in grace** - we are in a position where we are **highly favored by God**. We entered in this standing in grace simply by faith in Jesus Christ.

To be standing in grace means, to God we are:

loved as Christ is loved - "...the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." (John 17:23)

well pleasing - it is like the Father speaking over us what He spoke over Jesus: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)

fully accepted - "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

blessed beyond measure - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," (Ephesians 1:3)

holy and without blame - "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," (Ephesians 1:4)

faultless, unaccused, no condemnation - "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—" (Colossians 1:21-22)

qualified - "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Colossians 1:12)

There is nothing more that we can add to this through our own efforts, accept embrace this and walk worthy of this.

Therefore all we do - how we relate to God, how we face the devil and all we do in Christian service - flows out of our standing in grace, without any sense of guilt and shame.

3. rejoicing that comes from **the hope of the glory of God** - We have this hope that we will share in God's glory.
4. **rejoice in tribulation**, knowing this results in developing endurance, character and hope in us. (James 1:2-4 ; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

The Love God Has For Us

Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

vs 5, can be understood both as (A)the love of God being poured into our hearts creating in us an experience and intimate personal knowing of the love God has for us, and (B)the love of God being poured into our hearts giving us the capacity to love as He loves.

While we have this hope of future glory, we are not in any way ashamed in the present, because we are overwhelmed with an experience of God's love in our hearts here and now.

vs 7, Paul is indicating that generally for a even for a good person people will not die. Maybe for someone very noble, very good, very pure - maybe someone may offer their life. However, Paul contrasts how Christ died "for the ungodly" and "while we were still sinners".

vs 6,8 The love that God has for us has been demonstrated, exhibited, introduced or revealed to us in this, that while we were still sinners, rebellious, far away and even enemies with God, Christ died for us. This amazing love that has been demonstrated for us, and now is poured into our hearts for us to personally experience and personally give away to others.

1 John 4:10,19

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Reconciled to God

Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Romans 5:10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 5:11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

We are justified by His blood
We are saved from wrath through Him
We are reconciled to God
We are saved by His life

reconciled (vs 10) and reconciliation (vs 11) mean to change, to change from enmity to friendship.

We were enemies with God. We were hostile and indifferent to God. And it was God Himself who made the way for us to be brought into friendship with Him.

Colossians 1:21-22

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled
22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

In Adam, In Christ

Romans 5:12-19

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Sin and death came in through Adam's sin and passed on all men. All men were subject to sin and death.

Romans 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Romans 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Sin and death were in the world even before the law. However people could not recognize the count of sin accounted against them until the law came. Yet that does not do away with the fact that sin and death reigned right from Adam on, even over the rest of the human race who did not sin like Adam. Adam disobeyed a direct command from God. The rest of us sinned against God, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

Paul now introduces that Adam was a type of Christ and he now draws a comparison.

Romans 5:15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

Romans 5:16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Romans 5:18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

vs 15

Adam's sin brought death to many

Jesus Christ brought the gift of grace to many

vs 16

Adam's sin brought judgment and condemnation

Christ took all sin and released justification

vs 17

Adam's sin brought us under, in subjection to death

Jesus Christ released abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness enabling us to reign in life

vs 18

Adam's sin brought judgment and condemnation

Christ's righteous act (on the Cross) brought the free gift of grace resulting in justification (righteousness) and life (Greek 'zoe')

vs 19

Adam's sin made all of us sinners

Christ's obedience makes all who believe righteous

Note the result of receiving grace and righteousness - we reign in this life through Jesus Christ over everything Adam brought us in subjection to.

I Corinthians 15:45-48

45 And so it is written, "THE FIRST MAN ADAM BECAME A LIVING BEING." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.

47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.

The first Adam, Jesus the last Adam

Jesus is referred to as the 'last Adam'. So those of us in Christ, we are free from being identified with Adam, spiritually. This stops there with the last Adam.

The first man, Jesus the Second Man

Jesus is referred to as the Second Man. So those of us in Christ, spiritually are identified with the Second Man - a new race - a new man - that is created in the image of God (Ephesians 4:24).

Grace Abounds Much More

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Romans 5:21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God's grace is far greater than the devastation of sin.

What sin accomplished through death, God's grace extends its sovereign rule over, releasing righteousness and the God kind of life, through Jesus Christ.

We are in God's Kingdom of grace. His throne is a throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

Reflection



Q1, Review the outcomes of us being justified by grace, as mentioned by Paul in Romans 5:1-4? How do we enjoy these spiritual riches in our every day walk with God?

Q2, Review the contrast that Paul draws of Christ and Adam in Romans 5:12-19? Now that we are in Christ, what should our perspective be of ourselves? How do we go from being "Adam conscious" (always thinking of what has happened to us because of Adam) to becoming more "Christ conscious" (living out of what we have in the Second Man, Jesus Christ)?