

# *Right in God's Sight*

## Studies from the Book of Romans

### Lesson 5

#### Romans 4:1–25

#### **Romans 4:1–8** Abraham: The Forefather of Faith

Paul had just delivered the most significant, crucial aspect of his letter to the church in Romans 3:28, “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*” Chapter 4 will now serve as Paul’s illustration of this great truth. To prove his point, Paul singles out as his examples the two most revered figures in Judaism: Abraham, known as the father of the Jewish faith and King David, honored as the greatest king of Israel.

Read Romans 4:1–25.

Paul had earlier stated that no one is justified on the basis of their works because no one is righteous. He had come across some of Jews who claimed they did not need to believe in Christ for salvation because they were descendants of Abraham. But even Abraham discovered that it took more than works in order to be made right in God’s sight.

1. Read Genesis 12:1–3 for a little background. Briefly note how Abraham responded in faith to God’s call.

God chose Abraham because he was the most righteous man on the earth in his day. He became the forefather of the Jewish nation, God’s chosen people. Paul goes on to say that if Abraham was accepted by God on the basis of what he did, then he would be able to boast about his works—but not before God.

2. How does Paul correct their thinking in verse 3? On what basis was Abraham made right with God?

The word *accounted* in the Greek (v. 3) is a bookkeeping term. According to Paul, Abraham’s faith had brought about “balanced books” in God’s eyes. Think about that for a moment: nothing owed, every debt paid in full! This is the discovery Paul wanted not only his Jewish readers to make, but everyone who comes to God by faith in Christ.

Next Paul turns to his other example, David, Israel’s most commemorated king, as another who received God’s forgiveness. Read the account of David’s sin against God and the consequence in 2 Samuel 11:1–12:23.

There was no sacrifice prescribed in the Law to atone for David's terrible actions; the only thing he could do was cast himself on the mercy of the Lord and confess.

3. Romans 4:7–8 are a quote from Psalm 32:1–2. What does David have to say about the one whose sin is forgiven?

### *Look Closer:*

Once David was confronted and he could no longer deny his sin, he humbly confessed his guilt to God. In return he received the indescribable joy of forgiveness. Paul wanted all of his readers to experience this same joy.

Are *you* a sinner in need of God's forgiveness today? Have you chosen to ignore sin rather than deal with it, hoping it will just go away? Take a closer look at the reality of your hope and joy found in 1 John 1:8–2:2.

- ❖ What are you doing when you deny your sin? 1:8, 10
  
- ❖ Who is your Advocate and what does He do on your behalf? 2:1–2
  
- ❖ What takes place when you humbly confess; will you act on this today? 1:9

*Memory Verse:* "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" Romans 4:3

### *Word Wealth:*

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.), write a definition for the words below.

**accounted** (4:3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**faith** (4:16) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**imputed** (4:23) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Romans 4:9–25 Abraham: The Father of *All* Who Believe

The Jews believed that in order to be made righteous in God's sight they had to become circumcised and obey the law. Paul made it clear (Romans 2) that there had to be more—an *inward* circumcision of the heart. Paul now asks the hard question: When did Abraham become righteous—before or after he was circumcised? If he were declared righteous *after* he was circumcised, then it could be argued that he became righteous on the basis of his obedience. If, however, he was declared righteous *before* he was circumcised, then his righteousness was the result of faith and not works. Let's look at a summary timeline of Abraham's life to understand how things actually happened.

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Genesis 12:1–8	God calls Abraham, who responds in faith. God makes him a promise (at age 75) regarding his descendants' future. Abraham worships and calls on the name of the Lord.
Genesis 15:1–6; 18–21	God gives the promise of an heir, making a covenant with Abraham, who believes the Lord and it is accounted to him for righteousness.
Genesis 16	Ishmael (Abraham's illegitimate son) is born to Sarah's handmaid Hagar, 10 yrs. after Abraham arrived in the land of Canaan.
Genesis 17:1–11	God seals His covenant with Abraham, referring to him as the "father of many nations." Circumcision is instituted by God as the sign of the covenant between God and His people. Abraham responds by faith (99 yrs. old).
Genesis 21	God gives Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac, at the promised time. Abraham circumcises him at 8 days old; Abraham is 100 yrs.
Exodus 20	The Law is given by God—430 years after the promise.

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1. According to the timeline of Abraham's life, when was he declared righteous in God's sight? (See v.10 for help.)

God instituted the rite of circumcision as an outward sign marking His people as "set apart" to Him. From this point on there were only two designations of people on the earth: *Jews* belonged to God, and everyone else became known as *Gentiles* (meaning "the nations").

2. What was the critical element in Abraham's justification? vv. 11–12
  - a. Who then is able to call Abraham a *spiritual father*?

Abraham received God's promises by faith hundreds of years before the law was given to Moses. Attempts to keep the law shift the focus from the power of God onto individuals incapable of obeying the law.

3. What does Paul say comes with the law? vv. 13–15
  - a. If those who follow the law are God's rightful heirs, then what could be said about faith and God's promises?
  - b. What, according to verse 15, is the only way to keep from breaking the law?

### *Selah . . .*

If there was no law in existence, there would be no way to differentiate between right and wrong; everything would be relative. In your opinion, what would the world be like if every person was allowed to set their own standard of righteousness? Please explain.

### **Romans 4:16–25** Abraham: Father of the “Fully Convinced”

God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, that he would inherit the Promised Land, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him.

1. What does Paul say is the only way that all this would come about? vv. 16–17
  - a. How does Paul describe God in verse 17?

Abraham was justified by faith in God alone and so are we. The promise that he would be the father of many nations and that all the nations of the world would be blessed through him was ultimately fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham. We could say that not only was Abraham the spiritual father of God's chosen people, the Jews, but he is also the spiritual father of God's chosen people, the church!

*For Group Discussion . . .* How does Paul describe Abraham's faith in the following?

- v. 18
  
- v. 19
  
- v. 20
  
- v. 21

All of the above explains *why* “it was accounted to him for righteousness” (v. 22). Abraham had to have the faith to believe that his age and the “deadness of Sarah’s womb” would not prevent God from fulfilling His promise! He had to be *fully convinced* that God is one who raises life from the dead and calls into existence things that cannot be seen.

The message of Abraham’s faith was not only for Abraham, but also all of his spiritual descendants. In the closing verses of chapter 4, Paul ties Abraham’s faith to the gospel message.

- ❖ Briefly rewrite this Good News in your own words. vv. 24–25.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ❖ Are *you* fully convinced—persuaded—that this Good News includes *you*? Have you appropriated it by inviting the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart as Lord? Do you have the faith to put your trust in Him today? Tell Him so.

### *Selah . . .*

If you feel your faith is weak at this point in your Christian walk, it’s probably due to a lack of spending time with the Lord and a lack of experiencing God’s power. The more intimately you come to know the Lord through His Word, the more you will see evidence of Him working in your daily life. You can know for yourself what He thinks, how He feels, and what He wants for your life.

Spend a little time meditating on Hebrews 11:1. Look it up in a few different translations, jotting down what God speaks to your heart. Tell Him what you are hoping for and ask Him to reveal His answer.

*God has written His righteousness on your record; now let Him write that righteousness on your life.”* Warren Wiersbe

# *My Romans Road*

Listen . . . Learn . . . Live . . . God's Truth!

Take a look back at this week's lesson. Briefly recap what you learned this week and how you intend to live it out.

1. What lesson in your study became real to you this week?

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2. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

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## *Memory Verse:*

Write down what you learned about God from this week's memory verse.

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Write out the verse from memory.

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## *Prayer Request:*

Write out your most earnest prayer request and lift it to the Lord.

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