

**ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH  
MAN’S RUIN & CHRIST’S REDEMPTION – Chapters 4-7**

**LESSON 14 – JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE – Romans 4:1-12**

As we begin chapter 4, Paul teaches us that justification is available only by faith and is available to everyone.

Justification – To appear before God as though we have no sin. To appear before God as being perfect.

The Book of Romans is probably the best presented and organized writing on salvation in the entire Bible. In Romans, Paul builds the Biblical case that we are all guilty in our sin before God; that we all are in need of the Gospel of Christ; and that everything needed for salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 4, Paul stresses the point of being justified by faith alone...not through works...and in spite of the shortcomings of the person being justified. Paul uses two people from the Old Testament to prove his point.

**The Justification of Abraham**

**The Reputation of Abraham**

Romans 4:1, “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?”

Abraham was a huge source of Jewish pride and more central to the Jewish way of thinking than any of the prophets or even Moses.

To this day, Abraham’s grave in Hebron is considered a holy place by the Jews. He is believed to have perfectly kept the commandments of God even before they were recorded.

Along with Isaac and Jacob, Abraham was considered by the Jews to be one who had not sinned against God.

**The Righteousness of Abraham**

Romans 4:2-3, “If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

The Jewish pride concerning Abraham was based on his works so that is what Paul focuses on here. According to verse 2, if Abraham was justified by his works then he would have something to brag about.

This idea of salvation NOT by works is exactly what Paul was talking about in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Many of the Jewish rabbis taught that Abraham had earned the favor of God by his works or his obedience. Paul sets this straight by using a passage from Genesis.

Genesis 15:6, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

This verse is the first reference in the Bible to faith, righteousness and justification. Righteousness was not received by Abraham as a reward for his obedience or works. The Bible says that faith itself was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

So Paul's view of Abraham's righteousness is far different from the traditional view. Paul says he was justified because he believed...because of his faith.

### **The Response of Abraham**

Abraham believed...through faith...and became righteous. The word "credited" used here by Paul is found a total of forty-one times in the New Testament and Paul uses it thirty-five of those forty-one times.

Hebrews 11:8-10, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Galatians 3:8, "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: All nations will be blessed through you."

So what did Abraham believe when he was justified?

Abraham believed there would be a redeemer who would come from his descendants and bring salvation to the world. He believed the Gospel concerning Jesus.

Jesus Himself said this in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

### **The Justification of David**

Romans 4:4-8, "Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

In other words, Paul is saying that if you work and get paid, that is not grace...it is an earned reward. When someone is justified without working, then the gift of grace has been given.

"It is not the regenerate, the born-again man, who is declared righteous – it is the ungodly. It is not the penitent man, or the praying man – but the ungodly. It is not the professing Christian – but the ungodly. It is not the church member, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic – but the ungodly. If you have not relied on God as an ungodly person, you have yet to be declared righteous."

William Newell

David was considered the highest authority in Israel after Abraham and Moses. But consider this...

David, as great as he was, broke three of the Ten Commandments. He coveted Bathsheba, committed adultery with her and murdered her husband Uriah. The Old Testament system of sacrifice made no provision for premeditated sin. There was nothing David could do except cry out to God for mercy.

“David’s case was hopeless. But then God stepped in and in sovereign grace freely canceled his sin and counted him righteous! Simple faith was all that David had, but that was enough. David had discovered a way to have his sins not only forgiven but canceled.”

John Phillips

Paul could hear the voice of the Jews saying, “Of course Abraham was counted as righteous, and of course David was forgiven...because they were Jews.” Remember from earlier in our study that the Jews thought they were the only ones going to heaven.

Abraham and David were NOT justified by anything they had done or because of who they were. They were justified by their faith.

Galatians 3:7, “Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.”

Christ’s righteousness becomes ours only when we trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior. When we do, God welcomes us into His family. Because of Jesus and Him alone, we can now enjoy God’s fellowship.