

Romans 4:1-25

Today in our study of the book of Romans we are actually going to cover all of chapter 4 so 25 verses to cover this morning.

I think before we start we need to just understand that when the letters that Paul wrote were originally given there were no chapters and there were no verses...these were inserted later so that those who studied the Word of God would be able to find things more easily and understand the flow of the Bible...But for those that first received this letter it was all read at once.

So last week if you remember we turned the corner in our study of the book of Romans as Paul kind of wrapped up the things that he had been teaching that began in Romans 1:18 and ended with Romans 3:20 and in all those verses Paul was working to establish that the wrath of God that will one day come against all those that live in ungodliness and unrighteousness is coming for everyone. Paul has exposed all of us in these verses by saying that NONE of us are righteous, that NONE of us does good, that we ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And then when we came to verses 21-31 last week we began to discuss that you and I can be saved by faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. We can't be right with God based on our works or based on the keeping of God's law but instead Paul repeatedly said it was by faith, through faith and for the one that has faith in Jesus Christ.

This week in chapter 4 before we begin I think it's important to point out just a few things...the first thing I want you to know is that Paul in

this chapter is going to be establishing that Abraham the FATHER OF THE FAITH for both Jews and Gentiles was declared RIGHT WITH GOD not based on keeping the law but instead based on faith and we'll see that repeatedly in our study.

For the Jewish people especially, they believed that because they had the law and they had been circumcised that they were right with God...Paul has already established this is not the case but now Paul will use Abraham as the example for how God has worked in the past.

We might even keep in mind that the early church had a persistent problem with the Jews as they came to the Gentiles and said "It's great you have received Christ, it's great you believe in Him...but if you really want to be spiritual then you are going to need to adopt the Jewish law and by the way all the men also need to be circumcised.

For homework you might just read Acts 15 as it will address this confusion in the early church...At the end of the day the result of this was a letter that was written that made no mention of the need to adopt these Jewish customs in order to be saved.

The second thing I want to point out to you is that there is a specific word that is used 11 times in this chapter before us and it's given to us in English in a few different ways but the word in the Greek is the word logizomai and I want to work to define this so we can understand what is being conveyed in the context of the chapter...So in this chapter if you have a NKJV of the Bible you are going to find the words accounted, counted and imputed 11 times...and all of these are the same word in Greek.

The word logizomai means to take inventory, to conclude, to place on an account...Got questions.org defined it this way saying it means to designate any action, word or thing as credited to a person's account...specifically we are going to see that the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus is placed to our account **and what this means is that the moment a sinner believes in Jesus and accepts His salvation by faith, the righteousness of Christ is then credited to their account.**

What is amazing about this is that while we receive the righteousness of God by faith and it is accounted to us at the same time our debts are transferred or credited to the account of Jesus...He takes our sins upon Himself. Gotquestions.org again stated that through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, the sin of humanity was imputed or placed upon the account of Christ...he took on Himself the penalty for our sin.

That's just incredible because we haven't done anything good to earn or deserve this, we failed in keeping God's commands, we are dirty and filthy because of our sin and yet Jesus takes our sins upon Himself and we receive His gracious gift of salvation as we simply believe in what He accomplished.

Let me just give you two verses to establish these truths if you listen to 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says ²¹ **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

And then listen to Colossians 2:13-14 which says **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all**

trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Really and truly this is amazing news...You and I were filled with sin, we had a sin debt we could never pay...Jesus took our sin debt upon Himself and we by faith are then imputed or then accounted as righteous.

So keep that in mind here as we look at this chapter in Romans and look for those words accounted, counted and imputed as this concept is being expounded on that we are counted as right with God because of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us.

Look with me at verse 1 of chapter 4 which says **What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?** Abraham was a big deal and is still a big deal to the Jewish people as he is really the father of the faith of the Jewish people...I am reminded that often times the Jewish people said that they were right with God just based simply on the fact that they were descendants of Abraham...it's kind of like how some say well my grandma believed strongly in Jesus so I must be ok...this mindset was what Paul was seeking to correct and so he now turns the attention to Abraham and he is going to explore what Abraham found in his life when it came to being right with God.

Look at verse 2 which says **²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.** If Abraham was right with God or if any of us are right before God based on our works or our abilities then we have something to boast about...and sadly so many people in this world think this way for they constantly

think and say that they are better morally than the person next to them...So often the world forgets that one single sin stains and ruins the whole life of an individual.

I want to just read to you from 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 just to remind us that we are nothing and we have no space to boast and for that matter Abraham had no reason to boast either we will see for it was not his works and his deeds that made him right...but listen to these verses which say ²⁷ **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;** ²⁸ **and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,** ²⁹ **that no flesh should glory in His presence.** ³⁰ **But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—** ³¹ **that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”**

Not one person is going to glory in themselves when this life is said and done, instead we shall glory in the Lord...and if you were a Jewish person hearing this read I would hope that humility would set in and pride would be put down.

Look at verse 3 which says ³ **For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** Now Paul brings out the scriptural evidence for Abraham’s life...and if you were a student of God’s Word then you probably knew exactly what Paul was referring to when he mentions this Scripture...I want to just recount to you this morning when it was that Abraham was actually declared right with God and for homework

you might just write down and read Genesis 12-15 and get the details but as Abraham was called by God and was obedient to that calling he left his family and the Lord began to speak to him and to give him promises that one day he would have a large inheritance of land that would be for him and his descendants and Abraham in response began to say “that’s awesome Lord...but there is a problem and the problem is that I have no son to pass this inheritance along to when I die instead my land will go to a servant of mine.

And the Lord in Genesis 15 took Abraham and he said one day there will come one from your own body that will be your heir and the Lord took him outside and showed him the stars of heaven and challenged Abraham to count them and that if he could that was how many descendants would be his one day...and Abraham heard and believed in what the Lord said even though he was an old man at this point in his life and we see this in Genesis 15:6 which says **And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

By the way when it says Abraham believed in the Lord and he was counted right that is actually the first time in the Bible that the word for believe is used...Pretty amazing that right away the truth is conveyed that someone is right with God when they simply believe.

That’s an interesting development isn’t it? What did Abraham do in his life to earn this righteousness? Did he conquer various foes? Did He achieve great morality? Was he perfect at this point in his life??? The answer to that by the way is no, for he came from a family full of idol worship and on top of this he had his own wife lie at one point saying she was his sister in order to save his own skin.

Abraham was no perfect angel in his life and yet when he believed what God told him...the Lord said I am now accounting you (and there is that word we talked about) as righteous.

Look at verses 4-5 and we'll see a principle Paul talks about and develops they say ⁴Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

⁵But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, Here is the bottom line...If you want to have a relationship with God and have God consider what you have personally accomplished in life then you can do that as we all have what is called free will.

But I have to warn you if you think you can stand before God or gain entrance into heaven based on your works you are in trouble for your works and your abilities are going to be placed on your account as a debt...and what that means is that all your failures and all your sins are going to be taken into account when you are judged. Over in Romans 6:23 we are told what the wages of our sin are, when the Word says that what you will receive is death.

If God looks at your account and looks at your works He is not going to be impressed with how many good things you have done or how many church services you attended or how many times you helped out in your community but instead if you are judged on your works you will be found to have a sin debt that cannot be paid but by you suffering an eternity of punishment for your sin.

On the other hand Paul simply says that the person that doesn't rely on their works but instead believes on Him who has the ability to justify the ungodly (and remember that word justify can be said to mean to be counted just as if you had never sinned) then your faith is going to be accounted as righteousness...and remember there is only one that can satisfy the wrath of God, only one that can pay the price for yours sins besides yourself and that is Jesus Christ.

So Abraham is used as an example and some people may say well Paul is making a big deal of this believing thing but if you just took Paul out of the Bible and the letters he wrote well then what would you have? Could you still make a case for faith saving a person rather than works? I am glad you asked that question for the Bible is filled with references of those that said you must believe in Jesus if you want to be right with God.

Even Jesus made this clear in John 6:28-29 when He said ²⁸**Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"**

²⁹**Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."**

John the Baptist spoke similarly in John 3:36 when he said ³⁶**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

The Bible speaks over and over that those who are saved and accounted to be right with God are those that have believed in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Now in the Jewish faith there were two people that were highly regarded amongst the people one of which was Abraham and the other was David...If you look with me at verses 6-8 we'll see that David and what he discovered becomes the teaching point.

Look at verses 6-8 which say ⁶just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

⁷“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;

⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

Now when it comes to David, Paul is quoting a few verses from Psalm 32 and if you look at this Psalm we can understand that it was pointing to a great failure in the life of David and how the Lord forgave him.

David if you remember had committed two major sins back to back in his life in that he had committed adultery and he had arranged for the murder of another individual. Both of these sins according to the law were capital crimes...there was no sacrifice available. The law condemned someone who had done these things to death.

So David should have had no shot at being right with God for his failures...and yet as the prophet Nathan came to him and confronted him and David confessed his sin the Lord chose to forgive him...It was outside of the law that David was forgiven.

I might just add here that David as he experienced the forgiveness of God simply said blessed or happy are those whose sins are forgiven and blessed or happy is the one that God no longer accounts their lives as being sinful.

If you have personally given your life to Christ then you know this blessedness don't you? Man how amazing that Jesus can forgive our sins, that He can take away the guilt of our sin and the penalty of our sin and when you enter into a relationship with Jesus through faith you find an incredible joy.

I can remember the day I came to Christ and how joy and peace flooded my heart and the Lord made it clear to me that He had forgiven me.

If you are here today and you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus Christ then I know that you have guilt in your heart, you have a dread in your heart because of your sin and I have to just encourage you that coming to Jesus by faith trusting in His payment for your sins on the cross and asking for His forgiveness will absolutely change your life for all of eternity.

I would ask you this morning does your sin sit in your life as a debt? Or has it been forgiven? David in all his failures could never say he had done enough good to be right with God instead the Lord forgave the debt that he had in his life.

So both Abraham and David discovered the same principle that they were forgiven by grace, that they were forgiven as they walked by faith.

Now we come back to Abraham as David just expounds on the example of faith that we find in him if you look at verse 9 which says **⁹Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.** Remember the Jews relied on their circumcision and the keeping of the law to be right with God...and so

Paul asks them is this blessedness of being counted right with God only for those of the circumcision or is it for the uncircumcised as well? And of course we have established that salvation is found by any and all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...salvation is not just for a few individuals but for all the world.

Listen to John 3:16-18 which you should be familiar with which say **16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus came for the whole world, and anyone that believes shall be saved and have eternal life...if you choose not to believe or you want to come based on your works you will be condemned.

Remember this is like a legal case that Paul is laying out and so he is using Abraham as an example and he makes the statement here that we are asserting or saying it is true that Abraham was accounted right with God by faith...and then he gives the evidence for this in the following verses.

Look at verses 10-12 which says **10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 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, 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.

If you just look at the account in Genesis we find that Abraham was declared right with God in chapter 15...and then he was circumcised afterward in Genesis 17 as a sign of the agreement or the covenant that God made with Abraham

So faith came first and circumcision second...this is similar to water baptism for we who believe in the Lord Jesus. We believe in Jesus and are saved and we are baptized in water as a sign of the inward work that has taken place in our lives.

So Paul is just really making it clear for any person that would rely on their circumcision that faith came first and made Abraham right and then came circumcision afterwards.

Abraham as he believed became a spiritual father both to those who are uncircumcised and those who are circumcised...In the end faith was the issue not the keeping of rules or regulations.

Look with me at verses 13-15 which say 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. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.**

I want to just point out to you that the law wasn't even around when Abraham was alive...Moses and the law came along hundreds of years later...listen to what we are told in Galatians 3:17-18 which say ¹⁷**And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.**

The law of God which is what was given to Moses did not come for 430 years and when it came it could not annul or take away that Abraham was established by faith.

The law if you remember was given for a few reasons...First, it showed the holiness of God and the perfect standards of God...and Second, it showed all of humanity and especially the Jewish people that they had all fallen short of the glory of God...remember in Galatians we are told that the law is a tutor that brings us to Christ...the law beats us up, its kind of like a bully almost in that it constantly shows up and just pummels us to the ground...it shows us that none of us are righteous and it shows us we need a Savior. The law Paul says brings about wrath.

And we are told and I like this that without the law there is no transgression in other words if there was no rule then you could not be held accountable...Paul speaks of this over in Romans 7:7-8 if you listen to it which says ⁷**What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."** ⁸ But sin, taking

opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

Our sinfulness, our rebellion against God is actually woken up within us when the law is given...the flesh our sinful selves hears the law and we want to break it...When I was a child I can remember one occasion very distinctly where my mom saw me playing around with an electric socket and she told me very firmly don't touch that or you'll get hurt...and what did my sinful nature do? It said well why can't I touch it and I went over and got myself zapped.

Similarly we are not aware what sin is until we are given the law...but once it's in place we will be held accountable by it.

Look with me at verses 16-17 which say 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** 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;** When we see the word therefore we can say because of all that has been said previously or in light of what has been said and in this case Paul has made his case that faith being the way to righteousness came before both the law and circumcision and because of that Paul says that it is by faith that it might be by grace that a person is right with God.

No man will be able to boast that they did something...Abraham couldn't boast and David couldn't either...at the end of the day it is a

gift of grace through Jesus that saves a person or makes it so they are accounted as right with God.

And Paul here says that Abraham is the father of all who have faith becoming a father of many nations and Paul says that God is the one that can bring things about which do not exist or should not exist as He gives life to the dead.

This is so true for you and I and all who believe for we are dead in our sins and our trespasses, we are far from God, we have no hope, we are steeped in sinfulness, our every thought and motive is just wrong, none of us have the right actions, attitudes or thoughts and yet in Jesus God made those who are dead to be alive.

Ephesians 2:1-5 puts it this way saying **And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

You and I have no business being saved, we have no business being able to walk with God, we have no business calling ourselves His children and yet in Christ we who are dead are now alive.

You know just looking at these first 4 chapters of Romans sure does produce a thankfulness to Jesus in my heart, a thankfulness to the Father that He loves us so much that He chose not to leave us in a state of being spiritually dead. Can you imagine what life would be like if you didn't have Jesus? I know how my life was without Him...It was full of drunkenness, coarse speech, and lewdness and adultery and most of those sins that are recorded in Romans 1 as I was a young man who refused to be obedient to my parents. I was hateful at times...I was a slave to sin...but Jesus redeemed me, He set my feet on solid ground, He showed me His righteousness and helped me to come to a place of faith in Him and then He took all that nasty sin and clothed me in Himself.

I am forever thankful to Jesus...I can't boast in myself, I can't say I did anything...when I was against God and at my worst in life He gave His life for me on the cross of Calvary.

When we come to Christ by faith we are believing that He can take what is dead and make it alive...and Abraham did the same as he went through life...You see when Abraham was visited by God and told that he would be blessed in Genesis 15 it is thought that he was around the age of 75-85 years old...He was already past the age of being able to have kids and his wife Sarah was just about 10 years younger and what is interesting is that it was not until Abraham was 99 that his son Isaac was born...That's a long time to trust the promises of God without seeing the results and Paul addresses this great faith that Abraham had in verses 18-22 which say this 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.”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.²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.²² And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Abraham was not perfect in his life, he did make mistakes but the under riding theme of his heart was to trust that God would do that which He promised and I like what we are told in verse 20 when it says he did not waiver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in his faith, giving glory to God.

You see Abraham had to believe that God was going to do the impossible, that God was going to allow life to be produced from himself and his wife...and I have to say that walking by faith is often times like this in life.

There are times that God will place a challenge before us a promise before us...and often times we will have to walk by faith even when it doesn’t make sense...You and I must walk forward in faith as we pursue Jesus, we must hold on to the promises of God even though we may not be able to directly see them with our eyes...The heroes of the faith had to do so as well as they pursued the will of God.

The Lord told Joshua and the Israelites that they were supposed to walk around the city of Jericho for several days and then they were to shout and the walls would come down...that didn’t make sense and yet they chose to walk by faith and the Lord did bring down the walls.

And what about Noah...God turns to Noah and says hey I know you don't even know what rain is or what a flood is but I need you to build a boat and I am going to rescue you from the judgment that is going to come upon the world...Do you know that Noah was building the ark for 120 years? 120 years working on a project and doing so by faith in what God had to say...that took perseverance, that took trust, that took a man with a determination to ignore what anyone else might say to Him in order to honor what God said.

There are times that Jesus will place opportunities before us to walk by faith, to serve Him by faith, to honor Him as we walk through life and I sure hope we have a similar faith as what Abraham had when he was convinced that God would fully perform all that He said He would.

We too receive Jesus by faith, believing that God can raise those who are dead because of their sin and as we do so we simply believing in Jesus we are born again into new life.

Look with me at the last few verses of chapter 4 if you look at verses 23-25 which say **Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²³ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁴ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.**

Abraham and the simple fact that faith is what makes someone righteous was not only an example for him but it's an example for us. You and I have the same blessed assurance as we simply come to Jesus Christ by faith as He was given over to death because of our sins and was raised to life that we might be justified.

In closing I just want to share what the Word says over in John 15:13-15 which say ¹³Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ¹⁴You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Jesus displayed the greatest love when He laid down His life for His friends...and we as we come to Him by faith are called not only his friends but His children.

Jesus loved the world so much that He laid down His life...He took our sin upon Himself...He paid the ransom that you and I could go free...He liberated humanity as He died upon the cross...but man must receive the free gift of salvation to walk in the blessings that are found in Jesus.

Have you done that today? Have you cried out to Jesus that He might save you from the penalty of sin which is an eternity away from His presence in a place called hell?

I'll close with Ephesians 2:8-9 today which say ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. **It's by faith in Jesus that one is declared right...It won't be by your works, but instead eternal life comes by believing in Jesus.**

If you are here today and you need to get right with Christ, if you need to be saved I would just ask you to come up to the front here as we

worship Jesus and I would just love to pray with you as you make that step of faith.

Let's pray.

Romans 4:1-25 “Abraham Saved By Faith”

Cross References

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