

Romans Chapter 4

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Introduction:

1. This chapter is complex. Perhaps this is what Peter had been reading when he wrote:

And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him --speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction. (2 Peter 3:15-16 NLT)
2. We are offering the view of **Burton Coffman** to set the stage by discussing the intentions of Paul here and James in his book. There isn't a contradiction.

James was dealing with *justification* and Paul with the *righteousness* of God. Abraham, the example Paul cited to show God's justice in calling the Gentiles, was the possessor of Gentile status himself at the time God called him, in the sense of his having been called prior to the giving of the covenant of circumcision and prior to the giving of the law of Moses. What a beautiful argument.
3. The next question that Paul takes up is: Does the gospel agree with the teachings of the Old Testament? The answer to this question would be of special importance to the Jewish believers. The Apostle now shows that there is complete harmony between the God's system for making man right with Himself in the Old Testament as well as in the emerging New Testament. Justification has always been by faith.

THE CONTRAST OF FAITH AND WORKS

(4:1) Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did He discover about being made right with God?

- Paul uses **Abraham** as the first of two case studies. Out of a world turned pagan, **God** selected **Abraham** to form a new **nation**, complete with its own land -- and therefore means of creating wealth. **God** was on speaking terms with this man.

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. (Genesis 12:1 NLT)

- Notice that **Abraham** needed to be made **right with God** (verse 1). There is no suggestion in this or any Scripture that Abraham was sinless. This point is emphasized in the next verse.

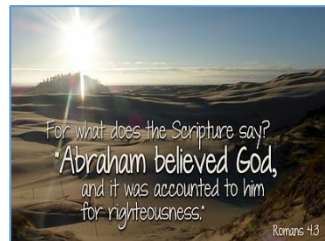
(2) If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, He would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way.

- There is no record of Abraham (Abram) being acceptable to **God** because he fed the poor, assisted widows and other good works. But there *is* a record of him being a man of faith as we shall see next.

(3) For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

- In Genesis 15:6 the record says:

And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.
(Genesis 15:6 NLT)



We must notice that this was recorded in Genesis chapter 15 and circumcision is not mentioned until chapter 17. Abraham's **righteousness** was not connected with circumcision.

- Paul labels the Genesis record as **Scripture**, not tradition or folklore. It was authority to this apostle and it must be authority to us.

(4) When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. (5) But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

- Abraham, the founder of Israel, was on good terms with **God** because of his **faith in God**. That put him in a **forgiven** position. He was in that **forgiven** position while he was a **gentile!**

(6) David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: (7) "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. (8) Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin."

- Case study number two is that of King **David**, often considered Israel's hero king. But **David** had a major life failing. He had ordered a beautiful neighbor lady to come have sex with him. There was no higher law in the land than what the king said. She had no choice, even though married to a warrior. But the Lord sent His prophet Nathan and **convicted David** of his adultery and the murder of her warrior husband. **David** reversed course. He repented.
- **David** is quoted directly from Psalms:

"Blessed are those whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those

whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! (Psalms 32:1-2 NLT)

- **David** spoke of all who were **declared righteous** by direct action of the **LORD**, including himself. No good **works** involved to earn right standing. Instead, they experienced the **happiness** and **joy** that comes from being in harmony with the **LORD** because **their sins** were **forgiven**. Nothing was earned, it was all God's unimaginable grace. It is the gift that brings **joy** and **happiness**.

THE CONTRAST OF FAITH AND CIRCUMCISION

(9) Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith.

- So the **blessing** of right-standing with God is available to **Jews**. Now what about **Gentiles? Circumcision** is a ritual matter, a work. But it is **faith** that creates the relationship of right-standing with **God**.

(10) But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

- Paul separates faith and **circumcision** because **Abraham** had right standing with **God before** his **circumcision**. Clearly, right-standing with **God** is not based on **circumcision**.

(11) Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous -- even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith.

- Paul points out that for **Abraham**, **circumcision** became a **sign** of the **faith** that had *already* made him **righteous** before **God**.

However, **Abraham** became the **spiritual father** of all persons of **faith**. This includes Gentiles.

(12) And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

- **Abraham** is the **spiritual father** of the **circumcised** IF they have his **faith**. It is not the **circumcision** that makes one righteous as most Jews of Paul's time believed, it is the **faith** that makes one a friend of God. Women could not be **circumcised** but could be women of **faith**.
- **Robert Haldane** identifies the distinction:

This implies that there is a sense in which Abraham is a father to some of his descendants, in which he is not a father to others. To those of them who walk in the steps of his faith, he is a spiritual father.

Jesus encountered these unbelieving descendants of **Abraham** during His ministry. He identified and rebuked them:

"Our father is Abraham!" they declared. "No," Jesus replied, "for if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example. Instead, you are trying to kill Me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. No, you are imitating your real father." They replied, "We aren't illegitimate children! God Himself is our true Father." Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on My own, but He sent Me.

(John 8:39-42 NLT)

THE CONTRAST OF FAITH AND LAW

(13) Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith.

- Giving the **whole earth** to Abraham is a startling comment on Paul's part. It is **not** so stated in Genesis 12 where God promised: **I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.** (Genesis 12:2-3 NLT)

So what might it mean that **God promised the whole earth to Abraham?** There is a clue in Genesis as Jacob was foretelling the future of his son Judah:

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to whom it belongs, the One whom all nations will honor. (Genesis 49:10 NLT)

So **Abraham** may have inherited the **earth** (verse 13) in the sense that he was a forerunner of Christ who *was* to inherit the **earth**. God said to the Anointed One:

Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.
(Psalms 2:8 NLT)

Paul's **main point** in verse 13 is that **Abraham** did not receive a **right relationship** by **obeying God's law** (be it written or sensed), but by his **faith**.

(14) If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless.

- While it is true that law keepers are right with God, *none of them exist*. They are strictly creatures of theory because in truth, all have sinned. But God's promise is also to people of **faith** and *they do exist*. Abraham and David were two case studies. So God has

made a **promise** of inheriting and that is not **pointless**. There are actual people who will receive it.

(15) For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

- The **law** exists to identify the will of God and does not have a mechanism for making the lawbreaker whole after that person **breaks the law**. Once the **law** is stated, all become **breakers** of the **law**.

(16) So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.

- However, **the promise** has been **received** without the **law** being involved and that came by **faith**. The translators have added law **“of Moses”** because Paul is writing to Jewish believers and that is the **law** that affected their lives. Most translators do not add these words.
- Since believers' right standing with God is **a gift**, believers can be **certain that it will be received** as compared with a works formula where a person is never certain that he or she has done enough.
- Since the right standing comes by **faith** and not by law-keeping, it can include Gentiles who had the same **faith** as **Abraham**. Were there any Gentiles who **believed**? We offer a few illustrations:
 1. **Enoch** walked with God. He lived *before* the Jewish nation came into being. Genesis 5:24.
 2. **Noah** lived *before* **Abraham**, founder of the Hebrew nation. Genesis 6:9.
 3. **Melchizedek** wasn't even a distant relative of **Abraham**, but **Abraham** gave him a title of the battle bounty because he was a priest of God. Genesis 14:18

4. Moses' father-in-law **Jethro** was a priest. He was not from Israel nor did he keep the Law of Moses. Exodus 18:1
 5. **Rahab**. Hebrews 11:31. A pagan, she was converted and married an Israelite official. Matthew 1:5.
 6. **Ruth**. Ruth 1:16. She was from a pagan land.
- There were many other cases.

(17) That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

- Here are the words of **God** to **Abraham**:

What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:5 NLT)

Abraham was not just the **father** of the Hebrews, he was **the father of many nations**. He was the **father** of people who **believed** in **many nations**. **God** honors faith wherever it is found.

- Paul identifies two powers of God that show Him be the God of all: **He brings the dead back to life**.
 1. He raised the widow of Zarephath's son. 1 Kings 17:17-24.
 2. He raised the Shunammite woman's son. 2 Kings 4:18-37.
 3. He raised the widow of Nain's son. Luke 7:11-17.
 4. He raised Lazarus. John 11:1-44.

There are many other cases.

The other power showing that God is the God of all is His ability to **create new things out of nothing**. The prominent example of this is Genesis 1:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1 NLT)

The God we serve has unlimited power and can *make* **what** He chooses, *restore* **what** He chooses and can *forgive* **whom** He chooses.

(18) Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping -- believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!"

- When people have been promised something, we all consider the one promising and if it can be done. When the four-year-old boy next door promises to give us a new Boeing 737, we are very skeptical. There is no **reason for hope**. But **Abraham** kept hoping that he would be the **father of many nations** when such an outcome seemed impossible. He **believed** God's promise anyway.

(19) And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead -- and so was Sarah's womb.



- Ordinary experience with life would inform **Abraham** that he was getting pretty old to have children. **Sarah** was way beyond the child-bearing years. **Abraham** didn't know how God's promise to him would come to fruition, but he knew that somehow, it would. So we see his **faith**.
- As for **Abraham**, he *did* have children after Sarah died and he remarried. For certain, he had six sons. There were likely to have been some girls but their names don't appear in the record. This was common among these people.

Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. (Genesis 25:1-2 NLT)

(20) Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. (21) He was fully convinced that God is able to do what- ever He promises.

- **Abraham** wasn't skeptical, **his faith** in **God's promise** actually **grew stronger**. This **brought glory to God**.

One writer said:

The apparent impossibility that **the promise** would ever be fulfilled didn't stagger him. God had *said* it; Abraham *believed* it; that *settled* it.

HOW THESE TRUTHS APPLY TO THE CHURCH AGE

(22) And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous.

- **Abraham's faith** was unreasonable and **God counted Abraham** among the **righteous** because of this blind **faith**.

(23) And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded (24) for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

- This unreasonable faith of **Abraham** was **recorded** at the time. This argues for this portion of Genesis having been written earlier than the time of Moses. Moses was the later editor, not the original writer. The book of Genesis does not *claim* that it was written by Moses.
- Every believer is to gain a lesson from the example of **Abraham**. We will be counted as right with **God** if we **believe in Jesus** and His leading credential is His **resurrection**.
- There is a difference between Abraham's experience and ours. **Abraham** gained righteousness based on a promise of something that *would come* while we gain righteousness based on believing something that has *already happened*, the **death** and **resurrection** of **Jesus**.

(25) He was handed over to die because of our sins, and He was raised to life to make us right with God.

- Paul expresses the grace of **God** this way in 2 Corinthians:
For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)
- John expressed it this way:
My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the One who is truly righteous. He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins -- and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.
 (1 John 2:1-2 NLT)

MUSIC BOX		
<i>Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)</i>		
Verse	Link:	Put in Browser:
25	<i>Wonder Grace of Jesus</i>	http://bitly.ws/p9u7