

Romans-Chapter 4

Rom 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

- Interlinear: “*What then shall we say Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?*” Abraham was ancestor to the Jewish nation (*Abraham begat Isaac who begat Jacob [1 Chr 1:34] who was Israel [Gen 32:28]*) therefore, along with the discussion at hand, the flesh must refer to the rite of circumcision which began with him. The Jews banked their preference with God on the fact that they were Abraham’s descendants. So they would have inquired how circumcision would have been of benefit to him, since they are now being told here that it makes no difference toward their own salvation.

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Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

- If Abraham was *rendered innocent* out of an *act*, such as was under discussion here, then he would have had bragging rights since it would have been on his own merits, but not before God. Justification comes “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (*1 Cor 6:11*) via God’s promise to Abraham and not “by the Law” (*Gal 3:11*), or any part of it, “which came 430 years afterward” (*Gal 3:17*).

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Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

- From Gen 15:6 Paul refers to Scripture to answer their question. Likewise it should be with us when teaching those interested in the truth and when answering our detractors. But what was it that Abraham believed God would do? He promised Abraham, then in his mid-eighties, that his offspring would number as the stars “if [he was] able to number them” (*v. 5*). As the pre-incarnate Christ, He reiterated His promise in how Sarah would “have a son” in Gen 18:10. Abraham’s *faith* in believing he could father a son in his old age was why he received God’s *justification*.

Heb 11:12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

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Rom 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

- Contrary to certain attitudes around certain holidays, nobody owes anyone a gift. The whole concept of gift giving is that it’s voluntary, where the desire to give is not based on entitlement. On the other hand, if an employee works for their wages, their employer is under obligation to pay them (*under the O.T., wages*

were to be paid the same day they were worked for- Lev 19:13), having no choice since the employee is entitled to *something* owed them.

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Rom 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

- In this context the discussion has nothing to do with “anyone [who] is not willing to work” for their physical sustenance where Paul answered “let him not eat” (2 Thes 3:10). Here it has to do with obtaining *justification*, not by earning it but, through *faith* and *conviction* concerning the truthfulness of God.

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Rom 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

- Besides Abraham, the name of another O.T. role model the Jews often invoked as being related to was the Psalmist David. He spoke of the *attribution of good fortune* to those who obtain God’s *justification* aside from thinking they can labor for it.

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Rom 4:7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Rom 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

- Quoted from Ps 32:1-2. Blessed- Gk.3107- *fortunate*. Being blessed has nothing to do with being lucky, since luck has a certain amount of risk associated with it. There is no risk at having lawless deeds... forgiven. There is a process that people are to go through where sins are covered (Gk.1943- *to conceal, that is, forgive*) and “faith is counted as righteousness”.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.

- impute- Gk.3049- *to take an inventory*. This has to do ‘remembering’ sins as per Heb 8:12 & 10:17 where “remember” (Gk.3415- *recollect*) does not negate God’s omniscience. In either case, the idea is that once forgiven He will not ‘bring them up’ or use them against us, neither in the now or at the judgment. The only sins God will remember in the end are those that have not been repented of.

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Rom 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

- This question isn’t so much as to whether the Jew alone was eligible for the blessing or if it included the Gentile, as much as it has to do with whether the Law has anything to do with being able to receive it. Paul reminded them of the discourse that preceded this question and the conclusion as to ‘by what means’ Abraham had obtained his *justification*. The next query is “when” he received it.

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Rom 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

- Reading Gen 15:6 and Gen 17:10 will put the timeline of these two events in their proper order. Being the disputant he was, Paul used Abraham as the example that would have put these Jews to silence. It would have been considered heresy by these Jewish brethren to continue arguing against what was generally accepted about Abraham, just to make the point that their Gentile counterparts still needed to convert to Judaism via circumcision since Abraham wasn't a Jew.

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Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

- Abraham took the indication of circumcision as though a *stamp* from a king's *signet* ring impressed in melted wax. Along with the name change (*from Abram to Abraham*) circumcision was an outward, physical confirmation of the covenant relationship he had with God (*Gen 17:1-10*).
- The purpose was for inclusion. The main reason for having the Jews set apart from the Heathen nations was to send the Messiah through a separated people. Once Christ came, justification would then be shared with the rest of the world who converted to being in Him through the same obedient faith that Abraham had **before** he was circumcised. He was the progenitor by which faith is defined and by whose faith justification is given in comparison.

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Rom 4:12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

- Besides making Abraham the father to the Gentiles who emulated the faith he had before his circumcision, he was also to be father of the Jews who were not "merely one outwardly... but... inwardly... of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God" (*2:28-29*). The physical Jew, who also emulated Abraham's pre-circumcision faith, is counted among the faithful Gentiles as Spiritual Israel "and in this way all Israel will be saved" (*11:26*).

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

- heir of the world- As progenitor, this expression cannot be found among the promises specifically made to Abraham (*Gen 12:2, 3; 15:5; 17:5*). He **was** promised to be "the father of many nations" (*v. 17*) including those through Isaac

and Jacob, but that promise extended to Gentiles through the righteousness (Gk.1343- equity) of faith.

Act 13:38 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this Man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by Him **everyone who believes** is freed from everything from which you **could not be freed by the Law of Moses.** (*Emp. added*)

- As predecessor and also heir, "Abraham should inherit the world as his spiritual children, and that his children should inherit it also as their spiritual family or household" – McGarvey. Even though the Son of God existed before all things physical, the "body" that was "prepared" (*Heb 10:5*) for Him as Abraham's "Offspring" (*Gen 22:18/ Gal 3:16*) came through the tribe of Judah (*Mat 1:2*) and the LORD saw "**His** offspring" (*Isa 53:10*), those who "are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Gal 3:28*), who "make disciples" (*Mat 28:19*) with "the word of truth, the Gospel" and are "bearing fruit and growing" (*Col 1:5-6*).

Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Gen 22:18 and in your Offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Gal 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his Offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to One, "And to your Offspring," Who is Christ. 17 This is what I mean: the Law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

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Rom 4:14 For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

- If justification was possible via the Mosaic Law then Christ would not have had to come in the first place, since heirship could then be obtained through the works of the Law. Moral *conviction* would be of no effect or reputation and the Divine *assurance* of good would be *rendered useless*.

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Rom 4:15 Because the Law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

- With any law there are regulations on behavior in order for order to exist or for it to have purpose. Any *violation* causes wrath (*Gk.3709- punishment*). If a law against personal assault didn't exist, it would then be legal to attack others with malicious intent without fear of committing a *violation*. Which is why there are no laws against "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal 5:22-23*) or any of the like since these are to be promoted for good.

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Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

- Thus justification *originated out of faith* so the promise (v. 13), concerning the Divine influence on the heart, can be *stable* toward all of Abraham's seed. This includes those under the Law (*physical Jews converted to Christianity*) and those who share the faith of Abraham (*Gentile converts, of which Abraham would have been considered before he was circumcised*), making it inclusive of both Jew and Gentile which make up 'spiritual Israel' as per Romans 2:29, making Abraham the father of us all.

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Rom 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him Whom he believed, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

- When God changed his name from Abram (*Heb.87- high father*) to Abraham (*Heb.85- father of a multitude*) He made (*Gk.5087- to place: appoint, ordain*) him a father of many nations (*Gen 17:5*). He didn't receive the appointment in a dream but before Him Whom he believed, even God.

- quickeneth the dead- This is Heb 11:12 where God was able to keep His promise to Abraham that through his (*and Sarah's*) aged body, which was "as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven".

- things which be not- It was as though it had already transpired that Abraham's offspring existed in his lifetime. When God promised such an abundant, future seed, because He does what He says He will do, He spoke of it as having already been done concerning the things which be not as though they were.

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Rom 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

- hope- Gk.1680- *expectation* or *confidence*. Abraham was *near anticipation* but *had faith* with respect to even the possibility that he, who was "a hundred years old" along with Sarah, "who [was] ninety years old, [could] bear a child" (*Gen 17:17*), let alone become the father of man nations through the product of such a union. He had such *confidence* in God's promise that he sincerely believed it would come true, even to the point of excepting it as though it already happened.

- After telling Abraham to "number the stars, if you are able to number them" the LORD said "So shall your offspring be" (*Gen 15:5*). If through Noah's family the world was once again populated, why couldn't God through Abraham's son Isaac do the same? Only here the offspring would be according to "the faith of Abraham" (v. 16).

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Rom 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

- In his ripe old age, Abraham would have accepted his impotency. On top of that was “*the deadening of the womb of Sarah*” (*Interlinear*), here, the deadness (Gk.3500- impotency) of Sarah’s womb. She had never been able to bear children up to that point so to just believe she could in **her** old age would assume Abraham had a great amount of faith.

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Rom 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

- How could he not retain his hope concerning the promise (v. 18) since he believed God would have been able to raise up Isaac if he had gone through with sacrificing him. Besides, throughout his journeys and in whatever circumstance, God had been there for him. Even when Pharaoh (*Gen 12*) and then Abimelech (*Gen 14*) thought Sarah was Abraham’s sister and because of her beauty how they would have desired her, in those cases God was there to protect Abraham. Through that and more he was strong in faith, giving glory to God as he grew in wealth and honor which he understood came from Him.

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Rom 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

- fully persuaded- Gk.4135- to *carry out fully* (in evidence), that is, *completely assure* (or convince), *entirely accomplish*. Abraham was so convinced that God would carry out His promise, that in his mind it had already been done. In his mind Sarah had already given birth to Isaac and in his mind he had already obtained the land that God had promised him.

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Rom 4:22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

- Referring back to verses 2 and 3.

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

- This was not written for Abraham alone (Gk.3440- merely), nor was it passed down from one generation to the next via oral tradition, as it needed to be “written for **our** instruction” (*15:4*) which was intended by God. The Jews needed this in writing and Paul needed it to show them how their physical lineage from Abraham did not benefit them without having his faith which had nothing to do with the Law of Moses. The Gentiles needed this in writing in order to have proof of their right to citizenship, through Abraham’s faith, as spiritual Israel in the kingdom of God.

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Rom 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

- God had intended that Abraham’s faith would not remain as his alone. It would be expected of all generations to share such faith, but now as it pertains to the resurrection of Jesus our Lord. As Abraham believed he, along with Sarah, would be “the father of many nations” (*v. 18*), we, with that same expectation, are to believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that “if we have died with Christ, we [*are furthermore to*] believe that we will also live with Him” (*6:4*), knowing “that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is” (*1 Jn 3:2*).

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Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

- Our faith also has to be according to the purpose of Jesus coming in the first place. After all, if we have the faith of Abraham, it must be with respect to something, it must have purpose and it cannot possibly be, according to the Gospel, in our own works to save us. Our justification is not and never will be of our own doing. It was obtained at a great cost but was confirmed when Jesus was raised knowing that His “being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer [having] dominion over Him” (*6:9*), and knowing He “will come again and will take [us] to [Himself], that where [He is we] may be also” (*Jn 14:3*).

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