

## #19 - Romans 4:1-12

Context:

- God is the God of Jews and Gentiles (3:29)
- God's justification by faith applies to both the circumcised and uncircumcised (v. 30)

"The chapter is...[an] exposition of the covenant [that] God made with Abraham in Genesis 15, showing at every point how God always intended and promised that covenant...would include Gentiles as well as Jews." - N.T. Wright (quoted in Thiselton, 113)

### I. FOR EXAMPLE, ABRAHAM! (v. 1-3)

Why would Paul move to Abraham as a case in point example? How did the Jews think about Abraham at the time?

- "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life." (Jub. 23:10)
- Abraham "did not sin against thee" (Pr. Man. 8)
- "No one has been found like him in glory" (Sir. 44:19) [All quotes found in Moo, p. 256]

Paul is going to directly contrast certain Rabbinic thoughts about Abraham.

*What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.<sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

- Abraham cannot boast before God because of works
- Abraham believed God
  - "Saving faith is a trust transfer...Saving faith is not believing that God is there. Further, it is not believing in a God who saves. It is believing God when he promises a way of salvation by grace." (Tim Keller, 98)
- Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness
  - Counted to him/reckoning/crediting means "to account to him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him." (O.P. Robertson quoted by Moo, 262).
    - Declaration of acceptance

### II. EXPOUND ON THAT, DAVID (v. 4-8)

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as

*righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."*

- Wages vs. Gift (v. 4)
  - That God acts toward his creatures graciously — without compulsion or necessity — is one of Paul's nonnegotiable theological axioms. (Douglas Moo, 263)
  - "Our righteousness is an either-or: either merited by our works, or credited without regard for them." (Tim Keller, 97)
- Work vs. Belief (v. 5)
  - By "works" [Paul] means performance of the Jewish law that satisfies alleged criteria for entrance into the people of God who will be saved at the final day." (Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 569)
  - This verse has been referred to as a summary of the gospel by many.
- The Blessing of God's Forgiveness (quoting Ps. 32:1-2a)
  - "It is not the reckoning of people's good works but God's act in *not* reckoning their sins against them that constitutes forgiveness." (Douglas Moo, 266)

## Truth for Life

Where have you placed your trust?

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"Suppose that you were to die tonight and stand before God, and he were to say to you, 'why should I let you into my heaven?' What would you say?" (D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*)

"another version of the question would be: *assuming for the moment that there really is a heaven, what do you think are the general requirements for admission? Who gets in, and who doesn't?* Anyone who asks one of these questions to a random sample of churchgoing people will be surprised at the large number who say one of:

- (a) because I have tried my best to be a good Christian.
- (b) because I believe in God and try to do his will
- (c) because I believe in God with all my heart

This is not a trick question. It reveals common misconceptions about what it means to believe, to have faith. Answer (a) is a 'salvation by works' answer. Answer (b) is a 'salvation by faith plus works' answer. Answer (c) is a 'salvation by faith as a work' answer. In each case, the person is religious, but is not someone who "does not work" (v. 5); they have not done a real trust transfer. In the last case, the person has even come to trust in his or her trust! (Tim Keller, 99)

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