

ROMANS CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The **KEY WORDS** in Romans chapter 4 are "believe" and "faith." These key words are found in Romans 4, verses 3,5,11,12,13,14,16,18,19,20, and 24. Justification is **by faith** and not by works. How do we know this? The Old Testament proves it (as shown by Abraham and David)!

Romans 4:1

How was Abraham justified? How was he saved? How did Abraham obtain the righteousness of God? What was true in his case? What did Abraham find? What discovery did Abraham make? *Application*: Have you discovered the righteousness of God? Have you found God's way of salvation? Sadly, most people have never made this discovery.

Romans 4:2

For the sake of argument Paul assumes something that is not true. "Let's assume that Abraham were justified by works. If this were true, then he could boast." To see how boasting (bragging, taking credit for, praising oneself, to speak or assert with excessive pride, etc.) is totally excluded from genuine salvation, see Romans 3:27 and Ephesians 2:8-9. There is only one kind of boasting that is acceptable to God: **BOASTING IN THE LORD** (1 Cor. 1:29,31), that is, giving all credit and praise to God for what **HE HAS DONE** (being proud of our SAVIOUR!).

It is obvious that no sinful person shall ever boast before God (see 1 Cor. 1:29 and the last four words of Romans 4:2), and thus it is evident that Abraham could not have been justified by works.

Note: How can we tell if a person is boasting in self or in the Lord? How can we tell if a person is trusting in self or in Christ? Sometimes a question such as this can be revealing: "IF YOU WERE TO STAND BEFORE THE LIVING GOD WHO IS AWESOME IN HOLINESS AND HE SHOULD SAY, 'WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO BE IN MY HOLY PRESENCE?' WHAT WOULD YOU THEN SAY?" Listen carefully to the answer and see if the person is counting on **SELF** or counting on **JESUS CHRIST**. For more help in determining whether a person is a true believer who is trusting in Jesus Christ plus nothing, see our study entitled, **Am I a True Believer?**

Romans 4:3

Was Abraham saved (justified) by works or by faith? This question is crucial. All religions of the world (including the various cults and isms) teach some kind of **SALVATION BY WORKS** -- that man must do certain things and man must fulfill certain requirements in order to be saved and win God's favor. God's way of salvation is totally different. Man has **utterly failed** to meet God's righteous requirements (Romans 1-3) but God through Christ has made it possible for sinful man to be saved and justified.

This verse teaches that **THE BIBLE** is the sole authority in matters of faith and practice. The Bible and the Bible alone answers life's most important questions. "WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?" **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?** This is the only thing that really matters! It does not matter what the Pope or the Prince or the Priest

or the Pastor says. What God says is all that matters!

Why did Paul choose Abraham as the prime example of how a person is saved? Abraham is highly regarded by millions of people worldwide. To the Jews, he is their highly esteemed patriarch, the father of the Jewish nation. To the Muslims, he is equally esteemed because Abraham was the father of Ishmael who was the father of the Arabs. Perhaps we can use this as a witnessing tool for both Jews and Muslims. **"Has anyone ever shared with you how Abraham became a righteous man?"**

How was Abraham justified? The Bible answers this very clearly. Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6. This Scripture clearly teaches that Abraham was justified BY FAITH. "He believed God" and that is how he justified. This verse says absolutely nothing about works! How is a person saved today? See Ephesians 2:8-9 (the same way Abraham was!). All men of all ages have always been saved in only one way: "BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH." However, the content of faith has not always been the same. For example, what did Abraham need to believe in order to be saved (see Gen. 15:5 and compare Gen. 12:1-3)? What do people today need to believe in order to be saved (see Gal. 2:20; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; etc.)?

WHAT MUST A PERSON DO TO BE SAVED? -- This has been the same in every age. You must believe God and take Him at His Word. You must trust in a faithful God. Salvation is by faith. Salvation is always and forever based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

WHAT MUST A PERSON BELIEVE TO BE SAVED? -- This has not been the same in every age because God has not revealed the same truth to every generation. Each person is responsible for whatever revelation that God has given to him. To whom much is given, much is required.

According to Romans 4:3, God counts (credits) Abraham's faith as righteousness. Abraham's faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness. This is what justification is all about. Think of a bank account. In and of yourself, how much righteousness do you have in your bank account (Romans 3:10)? As a believer in Jesus Christ, what do you have in your bank account (see Romans 3:22)? God put His righteousness into my bank account!

Think of an accounting page. God requires that there be found on this page perfect righteousness. But as I look at my page, I realize that I have no righteousness at all (Rom. 3:10; Isaiah 64:6). But having been overwhelmed by the good news of the gospel, I write the following words on my page: "I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart. He died and rose again for me." God takes what I wrote into account, and He says, "I count that for righteousness." And on this basis only I can be justified.

Have you ever considered the marvel of 2 Corinthians 5:21? He took my sin and I take His righteousness! What a glorious exchange!

Romans 4:4

This verse describes the person who works. The following verse (v.5) describes the person who does not work (the believer). The person who works (v.4) expects a reward for his work. He believes that his good works can earn him salvation and favor with God. Note the contrast in these verses:

The System of Works	The Way of Faith
The person who works (v.4)	The person who does not work (v.5)
Go to the following page	Go to the following page

The religious person (v.4) who is self-righteous	The believing person (v.5) who is ungodly apart from Christ
DEBT -- what God owes me	GRACE -- what God gives me
Wages -- what I've earned	Free gift -- what I do not deserve
Boasting (v.2) -- "Look what I have done to earn my salvation and win God's favor!"	Thanksgiving -- "Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!"

If God were to give us what is our due (what we deserve) what would that be (Romans 6:23; Romans 1:29-32; etc.)? God does not owe us salvation but He gives us salvation through Christ by His grace. By his works sinful man has earned only condemnation and damnation and eternal death.

Romans 4:5

Most people today believe that the way to be saved is to "BE GOOD." They believe and teach that salvation is earned by being good (according to whatever standards of "good" that they have). Romans 4:5 teaches that the way to be saved is **not** to be good but it is **to believe**. None of us could be "good enough" to measure up to God's holy and perfect standard of goodness.

"Lord, I am not good. I am not right. I am not holy. I am not righteous. I am a guilty, helpless, hopeless sinner. My only hope is to come to a gracious and merciful God. I believe in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and that He shed His blood for me and paid sin's penalty in full. I'm trusting You to save me and to make me the person I need to be. I can be good, but only through Your saving grace!"

"To him that worketh not" -- When a person is not working he is resting! Salvation (justification) is not working, but it is RESTING upon the work of Another (the finished work of Christ on the cross -- John 19:30). The believer's faith in Christ is counted (credited) for righteousness (just as was the case with Abraham -- verse 3).

Many people are not saved because they do not see themselves as UNGODLY, and thus they do not see a need to be saved. We need to see ourselves as God does. How does God describe you in Romans 5:6? In Romans 5:8? In Romans 5:10?

Thus in Romans 4:4-5 there is a great contrast between those who WORK and those who DO NOT WORK (believers). There is a heaven/hell difference between the two groups. All the religious people of the world (including all of the cults and "isms") can be described by the little word "**DO**." This one word sums up their religion of works. They are trying to do this and to do that to earn acceptance with God. Biblical Christianity (God's way of salvation) can be summed up by the one word "**DONE!**" "I rest my soul completely upon what Jesus Christ has DONE on the cross for me!" Which word best describes you? Are you busy DOING or are you resting on the finished work of Jesus Christ which is already DONE? See the interesting article by Mackintosh entitled [DO or DONE?](#)

Romans 4:6 -- The Three Great Imputations

The word "impute" means to credit to a person, to reckon, to put down to a person's account. The Bible speaks of

Three Great Imputations:

1. **ADAM'S SIN WAS IMPUTED TO THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE (Romans 5:12).** "In Adam's fall, we sinned all!" See also Romans 5:18-19. God sees the whole world as guilty.
2. **MANKIND'S SIN WAS IMPUTED TO JESUS CHRIST WHEN HE DIED ON THE CROSS (2 Cor. 5:21).** He was "made sin for us." The sins of the whole world were put upon Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1 John 2:2). God sees that salvation has been provided for all.
3. **GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IMPUTED TO THE SINNER WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS CHRIST** (Romans 4:6 and see also 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:22 and Rom. 4:5). God sees the believer as perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ. A sinner does not benefit from all that Christ accomplished on the cross until he believes in Him.

The first two are facts. The third becomes true only by faith (see Rom. 5:17).

Romans 4:6-8 The Example Of David

David lived under the Mosaic economy (dispensation of law). How was he saved? By keeping God's law? NO! Actually David was a law-breaker (see 2 Samuel 11--an adulterer). David was saved the same way that Abraham was saved and the same way people are saved today: BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH (Eph. 2:8-9). These verses show that David was justified (God's righteousness was imputed unto him) just as Abraham. David was justified "without (totally apart from) works" (v.6). The identical expression, "without works," is found in Romans 3:28.

Once again Paul goes to the Scripture to prove his point. He quotes from Psalm 32:1-2 which was written by David. Notice that the wonderful doctrine of justification also includes the glorious truth of FORGIVENESS. Forgiveness is here described in three ways:

1. Iniquity (crookedness, wrongness) has been forgiven.
2. Sins (which are many and which are great) have been covered.
3. Sin (which I am truly guilty of) will NEVER be charged to my account (the Greek double negative is used here making it a very strong negation: "NEVER").

Notice the emphasis on the word BLESSED (HAPPY). See Romans 4:6,7,8,9. The real key to happiness is not wealth or success or popularity or intellectual achievement or power or anything else that people are striving for. The person who is truly blessed and happy is the person who by faith in Jesus Christ KNOWS that his sins have been completely covered and forgiven. He knows that everything is right between him and his Creator.

Have you ever pondered the fullness and wonders of God's forgiveness made possible only because of the cross of Christ? Consider the following passages:

1. Micah 7:19 -- My sins are forever gone! They will never to rise to the surface again!
2. Jeremiah 50:20 -- My sins will not be found!
3. Psalm 103:10-12 -- How far has God removed my transgressions from me? (Note: the distance from north to south is finite but the distance from east to west is infinite. You can keep going west forever but you cannot keep going north forever!)
4. Isaiah 38:17 -- My sins are completely out of sight!
5. Isaiah 44:22 -- My sins are blotted out!
6. Isaiah 1:18 -- My sins are bleached! [red + red = white!]
7. Hebrews 10:16 (Greek double negative). My sins will NEVER be remembered by God.
8. Leviticus 16:20-22 -- The message of the goat that was sent off: GET LOST!
9. John 1:29 -- "Lift up and take off." My sins were completely taken away (blasted and rocketed into outer space).
10. Hebrews 9:25-"put away" = removed How? By the sacrifice of sin! God cannot ignore sin or overlook it. He must deal with it and judge it. This He did in the Person of our blessed Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ!

For another study on forgiveness see **Two Aspects of Forgiveness**

Where would we be if there were no such thing as divine forgiveness? How cursed is the man to whom the Lord will impute sin (compare Romans 4:8)! How terrible is the thought of a person dying IN HIS SINS (see John 8:21,24)! What would happen to you if God were to deal with you after your sins, that is, give you the punishment that your sins deserve (Psalm 103:10)? What would happen to you if God were to reward you according to your iniquities (Psalm 103:10)? Is it not better to let God deal with you according to HIS grace and mercy (Psalm 103:8)? If the LORD should MARK INIQUITIES, who would stand (see Psalm 130:3)? If strict justice were carried out and God were to scrutinize your life and make a record of every sin and hold it against you, how well would you do? Are you thankful for Psalm 130:4? Have you personally experienced God's forgiveness? Do you know of the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will never impute sin?

There is a tombstone which bears only one word on it: FORGIVEN! That word is more important than anything else that could be said about the person. Forgiveness is only found in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7).

Romans 4:9

Circumcision = the Jewish people

Uncircumcision = the Gentiles

Who receives the blessing of God's justification? Who benefits from the joy of sins forgiven? Does this blessing come only upon the Jews or does it also come upon the Gentiles? [A Jew is someone who has descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew.] When it comes to justification and forgiveness, do the Jews have a monopoly? One might think so from the men Paul used as examples: Abraham was considered the father of the Jews and David was the most famous king of the Jews. What about the Gentiles? Is there any blessedness for them? Paul answers this question elsewhere in the book of Romans: See Romans 3:22 (God's righteousness is for all who believe) and Romans 3:29 and Romans 10:12-13.

Romans 4:9b-10

Paul once again refers to Genesis 15:6, the key passage which shows that Abraham was justified by faith. Based upon this passage Paul then asks an important question in verse 10: When Abraham was justified (in Genesis 15:6) was he a Jew or a Gentile? Was he circumcised or uncircumcised? Which came first, his salvation or his

circumcision? The answer is very obvious. Abraham was saved (Genesis 15) long before he was circumcised (Genesis 17:24). In fact, after Abraham was saved his son Ishmael was born (Genesis 16:11) and this boy was thirteen years old when Abraham was circumcised (Genesis 17:25). Thus, Abraham first was justified and then more than 13 years later he was circumcised. As Stifler has said in his commentary on Romans: "Paul has turned the Jew's boast upside down. It is not the Gentile who must come to the Jew's circumcision for salvation; it is the Jew who must come to a Gentile faith, such faith as Abraham had long before he was circumcised."

Romans 4:11-12

Circumcision is said to be two things: 1) **A SIGN** -- signs are meant to point to something, and in this case circumcision pointed to the faith which Abraham had and to the righteousness which was credited to him; 2) **A SEAL** -- seals were used in the ancient world to show that a document was genuine (if you received a letter from the king and it had the king's seal on it, you would know that it was the genuine document, and not a counterfeit letter). Abraham's circumcision pointed to the genuineness and reality of his faith. Abraham was not justified because he had been circumcised; he was circumcised because he had been justified. The same is true today with water baptism. A man is not saved because he has been water baptized; he is water baptized because he has been saved. It is not the rite that makes a person right in God's sight. First you must be right in God's sight (by faith) and then the rite becomes right! See our document [Does Water Baptism Save?](#)

Abraham is the father of ALL WHO BELIEVE (Rom. 4:11). He is the father of the faithful. Every true believer can say, "Abraham is my father and I am his child." Every believing Gentile can say this (Romans 4:11) and every believing Jew can say this (Romans 4:12). Unbelieving Jews can claim physical descent, but when it comes to faith they do not bear the family resemblance (see Matthew 3:7-10 and John 8:33,37,38,39-44). Children should resemble their parents, and unbelievers have no spiritual resemblance to Abraham who was a believer.

The other passages which teach that Abraham is the spiritual father of believers are Romans 4:16 and Galatians 3:7,8,9,14,26-29 (those who belong to Christ by faith are Abraham's seed) and compare Luke 19:9. The account in Luke 16:19-31 is very interesting in light of what we have just learned. Who is the "Father" (Luke 16:24) that is seen in paradise? In fact, the very name of that place is called "Abraham's bosom" (v.22). That is the place where the faithful go and Abraham is the father of the faithful. The tragedy is that the rich man never knew Abraham as his spiritual father (v.24). He was rich but not rich in faith (compare James 2:5).

Physically, Abraham was not only the father of the Jews (those who came from Isaac and Jacob) but also he was the father of those who came from Ishmael (the Arabs) and those who came from Esau (the Edomites). Spiritually Abraham is the father of all who believe whether Jew or Gentile. Perhaps Genesis 22:17 is a reference both to Abraham's earthly or physical seed ("sand") and to his heavenly or spiritual seed ("stars"). Or, it could just be two different ways to say the same thing---that Abraham's descendants would be innumerable.

Are you following in the "faith-steps" of Abraham (Romans 4:12)? Do you carry the family resemblance? Do you take God at His Word? Are you a believer in the same God that Abraham trusted?

Romans 4:13

Remember the context. The key word in the chapter is "faith" ("believe"). Abraham's children are "all them that believe" (v.11). We need to bear the family resemblance! We need to follow in Abraham's faithful steps (v.12). We need to believe like he believed! We need to take God at His Word like Abraham did (v.3).

Heir = possessor

The promise mentioned in verse 13 is not found anywhere in the Old Testament in these exact words. Nowhere in the O.T. does God say, "Abraham, you will be heir of the world." There is no such verse. This is Paul's way of describing the blessings and the riches which would belong to Abraham and to his seed.

Notice that this promise is not to Abraham alone, but to all his seed also (see verse 13 and verse 16--"to all the

seed"). Thus the promise is to Abraham and to all his spiritual children ("all them that believe"--v.11). The promise is that Abraham and all believers will be heirs of the world and will possess the earth!

See Matthew 5:5--"the meek shall inherit the earth" ("meek" does not mean weak; it refers to a person who is broken and submissive to the will of God). See Matthew 25:34--when Christ returns to earth certain ones will inherit the kingdom. They will possess it and enjoy it! Certain others will be excluded (see verse 41).

See Luke 13:27-29. Some are in the kingdom (included) and others are out (excluded). Abraham and other believers are included! They shall possess the world and enjoy the kingdom. Those who are not Abraham's seed (unbelievers) will not be heirs (they will be excluded from the kingdom).

Abraham's true Seed is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16). It is Jesus Christ (God's Messiah, God's anointed King--Psalm 2:1-2) who will possess the earth according to Psalm 2:8 (compare also verse 12). The earth belongs to Him. It is His Kingdom! Abraham and all His spiritual seed (believers) will share in the blessings of this kingdom.

Thus the expression "heir of the world" essentially means "to be part of Christ's kingdom." According to Romans 4:13, how does a person become part of the kingdom? How does a person become heir of the world? Not through the law but through faith! If it were through the law, then this would involve the following: works, seeking to meet God's requirements as given in the law, trying to earn God's favor by obeying God's law, trying to earn God's blessings, trying to make yourself worthy, looking to get a reward as payment for work done, striving, achieving, etc. Faith operates on another principle entirely: **God gives and I receive**. I'm not worthy of any of it but God gives me what I do not deserve (that's grace!).

Romans 4:14

For the sake of argument Paul assumes something to be true which is **not true**. There are great contrasts here: law in contrast to grace; works in contrast to faith; a system of merit in contrast to God's free gift and unmerited favor; fulfilling God's Law in contrast to believing God's promise. The law requires perfect obedience; salvation requires God's mercy and grace. The way of the law is based upon man's best efforts which are never enough; the way of faith is based on Christ's finished work on the cross (Jn.19:30) which is totally sufficient. God's holy law utterly condemns the best man; God's amazing grace freely justifies the worst man. By the law the sinner is condemned and under God's wrath; by grace the sinner is saved and under God's wing. Law and grace are always opposing principles (see Romans 11:6).

If they who are of the law be heirs, then it is not **my believing** that counts but it's **my doing** that counts! I must earn my way into the kingdom by my works and by my obedience to the law. Of course, the legal way of salvation is totally impossible (see Luke 10:25-28--"this do and thou shalt live!", but no sinner could ever do these things!). Thus the promise would be made of none effect! No one would be an heir and no one would make the kingdom! All unrighteous lawbreakers would be excluded (compare 1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Eph. 5:5).

Romans 4:15

The law produces only wrath. The law can only produce a curse, not a blessing (Gal. 3:10). Why? Because of my condition as a sinner. A sinner cannot keep God's holy law and thus I am a lawbreaker. God's wrath must fall on me! Lawbreakers deserve death! Law-keepers deserve life, but how many of us have really kept God's holy law and kept it perfectly all the days of our life?

The law does not bring righteousness or blessing or an inheritance but it only brings God's wrath. If man could keep God's holy and perfect law, then the law would bring life and blessing (Luke 10:28). The law works wrath because of sinful man's transgression of the law. Where there is law there is transgression, and where there is transgression there must be God's wrath. The law worketh wrath, condemnation and death (compare 2 Cor.3:7,9). How foolish are those who want to put themselves under the awesome demands of God's holy law. Paul says that such people do not even keep the law themselves (Gal. 6:13). Peter agrees with Paul (Acts 15:9-11). The Lord

Jesus said, "None of you keepeth the law" (John 7:19).

Romans 4:16

The first part of this verse may be paraphrased as follows: "Therefore since law cannot realize anything but wrath, it (the promised heritage) is by faith in order that it might be by grace (God's free gift to believing sinners)."

Justification by the works of the law depends on man and must fail because man is a sinner. Justification by grace depends only on God and on the finished work of Christ. It cannot fail because God cannot fail!

"Sure"--It's a sure thing! The promise is SURE to every believer whether Jew or Gentile! Blessed security! Every believer should be able to say, "I'm **sure** that the promised inheritance is mine! I'm sure that I am an heir!" (see the discussion under Romans 4:13).

Abraham is the father of all who believe (4:11), whether Jew or Gentile (4:11, 4:16)! He is the "father of many nations" (4:17). He is the spiritual father of those who believe out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation (cf. Rev.5:9).

If the promise were by the law then it would be limited to the Jews because it was to them that the law was given (see Romans 9:4). But the promise was by grace so that all believers (whether Jews or Gentiles) could possess and enjoy the promise.

Romans 4:17

Notice that the first part of this verse is parenthetical. Thus, the last part of verse 16 should be connected with that which follows the parenthesis: ". . . Abraham who is the father of us all before (in the sight of) Him (God) whom he (Abraham) believed, even God, who makes alive the dead ones and calls the things not being as being" (the last part of this verse was translated according to the original Greek).

The quotation found in the parenthesis is from Genesis 17:5. This amazing statement is given in the past tense (not "I will make thee" but "I have made thee"). God states it as though it is an accomplished fact! In the mind of God it is already done! Historically Isaac did not even exist when God spoke these words! A similar example is in Romans 8:30--"them also He glorified." In God's mind and purpose it is already done!

Abraham put his faith in an awesome God! He came to God believing that GOD IS (compare Heb. 11:6). He believed God to be a GREAT GOD who can do two amazing things:

1. **WHO QUICKENETH THE DEAD.** God can make alive the dead ones. Abraham and Sarah were dead ones in the sense that they could not produce life (see Rom. 4:19 and Heb. 11:11-12). Out of the deadness of Sarah's womb God brought forth life. Later when Abraham was told to kill his only son Isaac, he knew that God would bring back his dead son to life because he knew God must keep His promise (Heb.11:17-19 and compare Genesis 22:5). Isaac thus became a type of Christ who was offered up to die and then was brought back to life (cf. Heb. 11:19 and Rom.4:24-25). Today God is still in the business of giving life to those who are dead (Eph. 2:1,5; John 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:11-12; etc.).
2. **WHO CALLS THE THINGS NOT BEING AS BEING** (He calls into being that which does not exist). This refers to the things determined by God to come to pass but which have not yet been fulfilled. God told us all about Isaac before he ever existed historically. God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-11). God through Isaiah can tell us all about a Persian king (Cyrus) years before he ever existed and years before he was even given his name (see Isaiah 45:1).

We should note that Abraham's faith was based upon the promise of God. True faith is always fixed upon the

facts of God's Word. Some people think that if a person believes something hard enough it will come to pass (regardless of whether God has said it or not)! This is not true, Biblical faith (compare Romans 10:17).

Romans 4:18

If Abraham were to look at Sarah and look at his situation and circumstances, he would have to say, "IT'S HOPELESS!" Circumstances were totally against it and there was no way the flesh could produce it (there was nothing he could do to bring about a child). But Abraham looked at an omnipotent God and fixed his faith upon God's sure promise! With man it is impossible (hopeless!) but with God all things are possible! God's Word and God's promise cannot fail!

Romans 4:19

"Dead"=not able to bring forth life (see Heb. 11:11-12). From a physical point of view it was impossible for them to have children. They were too old (for their ages, see Genesis 17:17).

Romans 4:20

"Staggered not" -- Abraham did not waver or doubt or display any uncertainty. He did not say, "God will keep His promise, at least I think He will . . . I hope He will . . . maybe He will . . . will He?" God is glorified when we take Him at His Word. Unbelief dishonors God (see 1 John 5:10). The promise never fails, but faith fails when we stagger and waver due to unbelief.

Romans 4:21

Here is a Biblical definition of faith (compare also Acts 27:25). The person who believes God is the person who is fully persuaded and convinced that God will do (perform) exactly what He has promised. **GOD IS ABLE! (OMNIPOTENT!)**

Romans 4:22

"It"=his faith (see Romans 4:3,5). Abraham was justified by faith! He received his righteousness by faith (4:3), his inheritance by faith (4:13) and his posterity by faith (4:17-19). He did not get a single thing by human works!

Romans 4:23-24

Now Paul brings home the application! What does Abraham and his faith have to do with people living today? The same God who saved Abraham is the same God who saves men today, and they are saved in the same way-- "by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8-9)! God has one way of saving men in all ages! The way Abraham was justified is the way that I must be justified! His justification was meant to be the pattern of my justification. As he believed God, so must I! As he believed in a God who could bring life out of death, so must I (v.24).

There are some differences that should be noted. Abraham looked ahead; we must look back. Abraham was given an unfulfilled promise; we are presented with a finished work! Note the future emphasis of Rom. 4:18 -- "SO SHALL" and contrast this with the past emphasis of Rom. 4:25 -- "WHO WAS." The first points to what God will do and the other points to what God has accomplished.

If WE believe on the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, then our faith will be counted as righteousness! [Usually Christ is presented as the object of saving faith, but here God the Father is. To understand this see John 5:23-24 and John 12:44]. The same God who brought Isaac out of death (first at his conception and later in a figure when he was offered up on the altar) is the same God who brought Jesus Christ out of death. Isaac is a type of Christ (Heb. 11:19).

Romans 4:25

Here we have a comprehensive statement of the gospel (the gospel in a nutshell). Note that the two great facts of the gospel are the death and resurrection of Christ (compare 1 Cor.15:1-4). Christ was delivered and handed over by God the Father (cf. Rom. 8:32) and He was raised again by God the Father (v.24). The word "FOR" is the same in both places and means "on account of, because of." WHY WAS CHRIST DELIVERED? On account of our offenses (in order to atone for my offences). WHY WAS CHRIST RAISED AGAIN? On account of our justification (in order to justify me). There is **the negative side**: Christ was delivered up to bear our sin with all its guilt and penalty. There is **the positive side**: Christ was raised again to provide the believer with a brand new place and standing "in Christ Jesus," and apart from that standing we could have no righteousness and no justification.

Apart from the resurrection there could be no salvation and no justification and no forgiveness (see 1 Cor.15:17). Romans 4:25 does **not** teach that the cross has nothing to do with justification. The Bible elsewhere teaches very clearly that the basis of the believer's justification is the shed blood of Jesus Christ (see Romans 3:24; 4:25; 5:9-- "justified by His blood"). The point here is that the resurrection of Christ is also essential for our justification. As William Newell says,

This involves God's giving this ungodly believing one a standing in Christ Risen . . . His death and resurrection are one and inseparable as regards justification. Christ being raised up, God announces to me, "Not only were your sins put away by Christ's blood, so that you are justified from all things; but I have also raised up Christ; and you shall have your standing in Him. I have given you this faith in a Risen Christ, and announce to you that in Him alone now is your place and standing. Christ is your life and your righteousness."

We stand in a risen Christ and IN HIM we are perfectly righteous (1 Cor. 1:30 and 2 Cor. 5:21).

What Is Justification?

As we come to the end of Romans chapter 4, here is a helpful summary of what justification really is :

What is Justification?

1. It is a declaration by God in heaven concerning a man, that he stands righteous in God's sight.
2. God justifies a man, on the basis or ground of the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). See Romans 5:6: We are "justified by [or in] His blood" ; -- the blood the procuring ground, or means; God the acting Person.
3. God who has already acted judicially, in pronouncing the whole world guilty (Rom. 3:19), now again acts judicially concerning that sinner who becomes convinced of his guilt and helplessness, and believes that God's Word concerning Christ's expiatory sacrifice applies to himself; and thus becomes "of faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26, margin): God's judicial pronouncement now is, that such a believing one stands righteous in His sight.

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4. Justification, or declaring-righteous, therefore, is the reckoning by God to a believing sinner of the whole value of the infinite work of Christ on the cross; and, further, His connecting this believing sinner with the Risen Christ in glory, giving him the same acceptance before Himself as has Christ: so that the believer is now "the righteousness of God in Him" (Christ).

Negatively, then, God in justifying a sinner reckons to him the putting away of sin by Christ's blood. Positively, He places him in Christ: he is *one with Christ forever before God!*

by William Newell

TEN ASPECTS OF JUSTIFICATION

1) The Need of Justification.

Romans 3:10-We lack the righteousness we need.

Isaiah 64:6-The righteousness we have is no good.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10-The unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom.

2) The Meaning of Justification

"Justify" -- Think of the word "righteous."

"Justification" -- Think of the word "righteousness."

"**TO JUSTIFY**" means "to declare or to pronounce righteous." It is a judicial term (see Deut. 25:1).

"Justify" does not mean "to **make** righteous" (see Luke 7:29 -- the people did not "make" God right, they declared Him to be right).

The opposite of Justification is CONDEMNATION (Deut. 25:1; Rom. 5:16-19).

3) The Problem of Justification

Romans 3:26-HOW CAN GOD BE JUST AND AT THE SAME TIME JUSTIFY THE BELIEVING SINNER? How can a righteous God justify an ungodly, guilty person (Rom. 4:5)? Apart from Calvary's cross there can be no solution.

4) The Basis of Justification

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"Justified by **His blood**" (Romans 5:9)

The substitutionary death of Christ is the one and only basis for the justification of sinful men (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isaiah 53:6). All the demands of Divine justice have been fully satisfied by the finished work of Christ on the cross. God **judged** His Son (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21) so that He might **justify** the believing sinner (Rom. 4:5). My Substitute took my sin so that I might receive His righteousness! (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21). The death of Christ is the only basis of justification; otherwise the death of our Saviour would have been "in vain" (Gal. 2:21).

5) The Source of Justification

"justified freely by **His grace**" (Rom. 3:24)

It's all of God and all of grace! We don't deserve God's gift of righteousness at all (compare Rom. 5:15-16). The publican did not deserve it (Luke 18:13-14) and the "ungodly" do not deserve it (Rom. 4:5)!

God in His grace provided it, offers it to all and gives it to all who believe!

6) The Channel of Justification

"Justified by **faith**" (Rom. 3:28; 5:1)

How does a sinner get this perfect righteousness? It is received "by faith." The sinner is justified by the death of Christ **as to the basis** and through **faith as to its appropriation**. The free gift of God's righteousness must be personally "received" (Romans 5:17).

7) The Example of Justification

ABRAHAM is the prime example used by both Paul and James (Gen.15:6; Romans 4; James 2).

8) The Result of Justification.

God's perfect righteousness is put to my account (Rom.4:3-5) and thus I am perfectly righteous, not in myself (I'm still a sinner), but "IN CHRIST JESUS" (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30). God now sees me just as righteous as Jesus Christ (1 John 3:7), just as if I have never sinned and just as if I have always kept God's holy law perfectly! Being justified I now have PEACE WITH GOD (Rom.5:1) and NO CONDEMNATION (Romans 8:1; John 3:18; 5:24). See also the study entitled **215 Things That are True of Me Now That I am Saved.**

9) The Evidence of Justification

James says that Abraham was "justified by works" (James 2:14-22). This is how we "show our faith" and this is how we prove to men the reality of our justification! See also 1 John 2:29; 3:7; 3:10. Consider also our study entitled, Justification by Faith and Justification by Works--Did James Contradict Paul?

10) The Hope (future) of Justification

Romans 8:30 -- -"whom He justified, them He also GLORIFIED."
Glorification is guaranteed and in the mind of God it is already done!

