

ROMANS 4

Abraham Justified by Faith

Abraham and David Justified by Faith

1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say?

Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.

Righteousness by Faith for Circumcised and Uncircumcised

9 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. 10 How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, 12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Believers are the Seed of Abraham

13 For the promise to Abraham and his seed (σπέρμα) that he would be heir of the world (κόσμος) did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath (ὀργή), but where there is no law there is no transgression (παράβασις). 16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace (χάρις) and be guaranteed to all his seed (σπέρμα)—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who is sourced from the faith of Abraham (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ), who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written,

I have made you the father of many nations—

in the presence of the God in whom he believed (πιστεύω, aor.), who gives life to the dead¹ and calls into existence the things that do not exist.² 18 In hope he believed (πιστεύω, aor.) against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told,

Thus will be your seed (σπέρμα).

19 He did not weaken in faith (τῆ πίστει) when he considered (κατανοέω, aor.)³ his own body, which was as good as dead (because he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 No unbelief (τῆ ἀπιστίᾳ) made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith (πίστις) as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced (πληροφορέω, aor. pass.)⁴ that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why it was counted (λογίζομαι, aor. pass.)⁵ to him unto righteousness (εἰς δικαιοσύνην). 23 But the words it was counted (λογίζομαι, aor. pass.) to him were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe upon (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπι) him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was handed over (παραδίδωμι, aor. pass.) on account of our trespasses (παράπτωμα) and raised in the interest of our justification (δικαίωσις).⁶

¹ See *Resurrection*.

² See *God as Creator*.

³ “[T]o look at in a reflective manner, *consider, contemplate* τὶ *someh.*” (BDAG, 522).

⁴ “[C]onvince fully” (BDAG, 827). Ro 14:5; Col 4:12.

⁵ “[T]o determine by mathematical process, *reckon, calculate*, freq. in a transf. sense...*count, take into account* τὶ *someh....credit someh. to someone as someh.*” (BDAG, 597).

⁶ “[O]n account of transgressions...; but...*in the interest of justification*” (BDAG, 225).

Biblical Worldview

- 1. Neither circumcision nor any other work can make us righteous before God.**
 - a. “Even before the ‘work’ of his circumcision, Scripture praises [Abraham] as being just on account of faith alone (cf. Genesis 15). Now if the work of his circumcision did nothing to make him just, a work that God had commanded him to do and hence a work of obedience, then surely no other good work can do anything to make a person just.”⁷

- 2. Abraham was justified several years before he was circumcised.**
 - a. “[T]he Jews cannot be Abraham’s heirs just because of their blood relationship to him and still less because of the works of the law. Rather, they have to inherit Abraham’s faith if they want to be his real heirs, since it was prior to the Law of Moses and the law of circumcision that Abraham became just through faith and was called a father of all believers.”⁸

- 3. Because of our inner sinfulness, the law brings about not righteousness but wrath.**
 - a. “[T]he law brings about more wrath than grace, because no one obeys it with love and eagerness. More disgrace than grace come from the works of the law.”⁹

- 4. The lives of Abraham and David show justification by faith alone is nothing new.**
 - a. “Don’t be frightened at justification by faith only. Read your Old Testament, and you will find God has always dealt with men on the faith principle.”¹⁰

⁷ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.”

⁸ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.”

⁹ Martin Luther, “Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.”

¹⁰ W. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 1*, 25.

Notes