

Abraham, Father of The Gentiles

A Study on Romans 4:4-25

Introduction:

Justification must be a very important teaching, for Paul addresses it in Romans chapters 3, 4, and 5. If it was important to him, it should be important to us. Justification is forgiveness of past sins (Romans 3:25), through God's forbearance or grace, or unmerited favor. But what about sins of today, or future sins? Is justification a license to keep sinning?

This chapter reveals God's purpose to justify any and all, including the Gentiles, which exercise faith in the grace of God to not only forgive us but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 4:4

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

Grace is a gift, not something you can earn by working for it.

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

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Don't let this magnanimous gift of grace be in vain, but become workers with Christ for the salvation of man.

2Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Grace, being a free gift, has been extended to all, not to just those living in the New Testament times, but everyone from Adam on. The Scriptures record many faithful saints.

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Grace, being an eternal attribute of God, existed from eternity past for God never changes. But grace was not needed until there was sin. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. The law was given to reveal our sin to us and our need of grace, and therefore our need of a Saviour.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

2Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Grace brings salvation to all men, for by it we are saved through faith in that grace.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Acts 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Grace is power to save from sin, and to fulfill righteousness in us unto eternal life.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

2Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

1Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Sin shall no longer have dominion over you for you are under grace.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 4:5

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

Let's examine what Paul means when he says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him." "Believeth" means to have faith in, to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ,) to commit, to trust.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6) Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7) That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8) This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.

Isaiah tells us that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" as if to say, they simply do not exist.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

If we could be saved by works of righteousness, there would be no need of grace. If in our own strength we had the power to obey the law, we would not need the power of grace that reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life." It is His strength through His grace that is made perfect through our weakness. The Lord told Paul all he needed was His grace.

2Corinthians 12:9 And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Romans 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

If we could merit justification by the “works of righteousness,” by keeping the law, there would be no need of Christ.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Let's now take a look at the phrase, “but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly.” What has God done for us to cause us to believe in Him, to have faith in Him, to trust in Him?

Romans 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8) But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

The gospel or grace of Christ (Galatians 1:6, 7), is the righteousness of God revealed by Jesus Christ which empowers the just to live by faith.

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

What does Paul mean by his statement, “his faith is counted for righteousness?” When one places their faith in the power of God to forgive and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness, recognizing that in themselves they have no power to perform righteousness, that faith is counted, reckoned, imputed to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:6

Romans 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7) Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Does that imputed “righteousness without works” apply to the Old Testament people?

Psalms 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Jeremiah 51:10 The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Romans 4:9, 10

Romans 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. 10) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

In the above verses, Paul now turns attention to whether the imputed (reckoned) righteousness only applied to the Jews or also to the Gentiles. He then affirmed that righteousness was imputed to Abraham by faith and not by works, specifically, the work of circumcision.

Romans 4:11

Romans 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:

Paul states in the above verse, that the sign or seal of circumcision signified that righteousness was imputed to him by faith and not by works. Paul continues to say that Abraham would be “the father of all them that believe,” whether they be Jew or Gentile, and that righteousness would be imputed to them as well.

This doctrine must be of great importance because, Paul again states the same thing in the verse below.

Romans 4:12

Romans 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.

Romans 4:13

Romans 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.

In the verse above, Paul drives home the thought that the promised seeds of Abraham would not come from any work that he would do, but by faith in, to entrust (especially one’s spiritual well-being to Christ,) to commit, to trust.

Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21) And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. 22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:14

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

“Works of righteousness,” also known as, “works of the flesh,” would never be able to fulfill the promise of a miracle birth to Abraham and Sarah. Saving faith was faith in the ability of God that, “what He had promised, He was able also to perform.” Likewise, if we think that we can bring forth works of righteousness resulting in a “born again” experience, in “a new creature in Christ Jesus,” that promise of a new birth will never happen. It is only by believing in the miraculous power of Christ working in us that the promise will be realized.

Romans 4:15

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

What does Paul mean by “the law worketh wrath?” The results of believing in self-salvation place us “under the law,” that is, “the law of works,” also known as “the law of sin and death,” doing “works of the flesh,” and reaping “wrath” “under the curse of the law,” which cannot be fulfilled without the love Christ imparts.

Romans 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7) Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8) And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9) So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. 10) For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11) But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12) And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Let's now take a look at the phrase, “for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.” The wrath comes from transgressing the law for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23,) and “sin is the transgression of the law (1John 3:4.) So if there is no law, there can be no sin, and if there is no sin, there is no wrath, and if there is no wrath then there is no need for someone to save us from wrath.

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Romans 4:16

Romans 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, [the Jews] but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all [including the Gentiles],

Romans 4:17

Romans 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.

God is able to bring forth the promised seed from a dead womb. He is even able to bring forth the promised Seed from a virgin! If He can do that, can't He fulfill His promise to make me righteous?!!

Romans 4:18

Romans 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.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance [evidence] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Romans 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

Romans 4:19-22

Romans 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: 20) He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21) And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. 22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Romans 4:23-25

Romans 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 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; 25) Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Not just to Abraham was righteousness imputed, but to all who believe that Christ died for our sins, having no sin of His own, and that His resurrection proved He could be our substitute having paid the penalty for our sins. The provision for our justification (forgiveness) has been accomplished, and if we have faith that all power is given unto Him because of His victory, and that He can fulfill righteousness in us, that victory can be ours.

Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5) By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name:

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

James 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15) If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16) And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18) Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19) Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25) Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

We are not saved by works, we are not saved without works, we are saved by faith that works by love.

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