

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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Romans 4 - Father of Faith

Romans 4:1-3: *1. What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen 15:6). Paul mentions “works/deeds” ^(G2041) several times (18) in Romans. It is important to know what kind of works are in view. James, also quoted Genesis 15:6, adding, Even so faith, if it hath not works ^(G2041) *is dead, being alone* (Jam 2:17-21), but used a different incident in Abraham’s life. Jesus, in answer to the Jew’s question about the work of God, said: *This is the work* ^(G2041) *of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent* (Jn 6:27-29), and this Abraham did.*

This is an good example to illustrate accurate interpretation by going to the O.T. quote for definitions. The Greek for “believe” carries the idea of a commitment via trust in a person or thing, where as the Hebrew word ^(H539) goes a step further with the idea of being spiritually nourished by what one hears and sees. Additionally, the same word is also translated “be faithful” 20 times, “be nursed, or nourished” three times and “to trust” six times. The fact that righteousness is imputed to the believer, is because God looks at your potential, if you continue in the faith.

Romans 4:4-5: *4. Now to him that works is the reward (pay, wages) not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5. But to him that works not, but believeth on him that justifies* ^(G1344) *the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Another word, used often, needs clarification: The Greek word *dikaios** ^(G1344) *has the proper meaning of to render innocent, to make righteous. Many view the words justification & justify as legal terms to teach that Christ HAD to die in order for man to be forgiven; He became our *advocate*, or defense attorney, neither of which are true. The Father chose this method as best to manifest that He loved humanity as much as His only Son (Jn 17:23). While many Bibles use the word “Advocate” (1Jn 2:1), the Greek should have been translated “Comforter” as it is in the other four references (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), adding to the proof that Christ is the Comforter and not a third person or a third God.*

“Works” fall into one of two categories: 1) From man’s fleshly understanding, or 2) From Christ’s spiritual understanding, called “faith,” which comes only via the Spirit of God - all works are based on a person’s thoughts (Gal 5:19, 22). Works of the flesh are by a person attempting to earn righteousness; where works of faith are based on God’s thoughts and ways, causing you to change your thoughts and ways (Isa 55:7-8). It is a gift that is impossible for man to acquire on his own. **Romans 6:23:** *For the wages (not penalty) of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Concerning Israel, Paul stated: But Israel, [who pursued] the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. [Why?] Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone* (Rom 9:31-32). *Works of law* are the things people do based on their understanding of the Bible, rather than the way Jesus explains the law (His faith). Therefore, the spiritual law is His explanation - not man’s, nor, necessarily the way it reads (letter of the law). The Jews had errors in their ideas about the Messiah and what He would accomplish when He came. The same problem is with us today, and will result in many rejecting the Anointed One (Christ) as did the Jews.

Romans 4:6-8: *6. Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes 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.* Note that the righteousness of God is imputed/reckoned without any works (of man). Psalms 32:1-2 are quoted. Here is a comparison of the Hebrew words to the Greek words, with other meanings of some of the words:

Greek: *Blessed are they whose iniquities* ^(G458) [lawless acts] *are forgiven* ^(G863) [put away (as God sees)], *and whose sins are covered* ^(G1943) [by love - Pr 10:12; 1Pt 4:8]. Both verbs are in the “Passive Voice,” indicating that “they” are not doing the action, but the action is being done to them - i.e. it is God’s work in man’s heart.

Hebrew: *Blessed is he whose transgression* [rebellion] *is forgiven* [lifted up], *whose sin is covered* ^(H3680). Again, both verbs are in the “Passive Voice,” “Lawless acts” in Greek are synonymous with “rebellion” in Hebrew.

The Greek rendered as “covered” is used figuratively of a word that literally means “to conceal,” whereas the Hebrew word, also used figuratively, has a literal meaning of to fill hollows. I think of the spiritual hollows in my heart, being revealed to me, and not concealed by my works, which Christ fills with the understanding of His and the Father’s love, as He teaches me about themselves and shows me how to change from the inside out (Pr 24:4).

Romans 4:9-12: 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. 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: 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.*

Physical circumcision distinguished the Jew from those of other nations (Gentiles). While it was given to Abraham, it later was required by the law (Lv 12:3) given at Mount Sinai. **Genesis 17:10-11:** 9. *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 10. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised {Spiritually}. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin {Physical}; and it shall be a token [sign] of the covenant betwixt me and you.* Physical circumcision was a symbol of the spiritual (Dt 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:28-29). Every professed Christian, especially those who are members of a religious organization, should carefully consider the principle of circumcision, as only Christ circumcises the heart (Col 2:11), and not the doctrinal creeds of any organization, and no person should ever judge another as being lost, as only God knows the heart (1Sam 16:7; 2Cor 10:7).

Romans 4:13-14: 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. 14. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:* Did Abraham ever inherit the world? Did he ever inherit the land of Canaan (Gen 15:7; 28:4)? The answer to both questions is no; and yet the Bible states that God gave the land to Abraham. What God gave to Abraham was the spiritual reality of the symbol: **Hebrews 11:8-10:** 8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in [tents] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* A city is a symbol for a way of thinking (Jer 1:18). The world is a symbol for the mind, which in the beginning is void of spiritual understanding. **Jeremiah 4:22-23:** 22. *For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. 23. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.* (Judah’s condition just before being taken over by Babylon - their earth {understanding} was void of how to do good).

The things created are to reveal the hidden things about God, and the things hidden in our own hearts (Rom 1:20). That which God reveals via His Spirit, when received, is a person's faith. The more we receive of His understanding, the stronger is our faith. Those who insist on living by their own understanding of the law, actually make the promise of the Spirit of no effect (Gal 3:14). They are attempting to obtain righteousness by the law, and therefore live according to the law and not the faith of Christ, which Abraham had without the law. Abraham lived according to God's voice speaking through his conscience, the example of how we are to live today.

Romans 4:15-16: 15. *Because the law works (brings about) wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.* 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,* Some take verse 15 to mean that there has to be a law to reveal sin, and therefore teach that the law existed from creation of the world. But the meaning of the verse is that where there is no understanding of the law, there is no transgression of the law, in that person's mind (Phil 3:4-6;). Sin existed before the law (Rom 3:9-11), and exists among those without the law. The theme which Paul is revealing in the book of Romans is twofold, God cares for: 1) the Gentile just as much as the Jew; 2) and for those who have not an understanding of the law (or, Bible) as well as those who do. (This topic will be covered again in chapter 7 of Romans)

How does the law bring about wrath? Most believe that when the law is broken that God becomes angry, and that Jesus died to take the assumed wrath in our place when we accept Jesus as Savior. Many scriptures make it sound that way, example: **Zechariah 7:12:** *Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.* However, God's wrath is defined in chapter one as God giving up those who refuse to hear, and turns away so that they can carry out their own desires (Rom 1:18, 24; reread verses 18-32). Wrath in a person is revealed when faced with the truth and the refusal to walk in the light of it. Spiritual understanding comes via the Spirit of God (cf Rom 7:14; 1Cor 2:14), and instills peace in the soul - not wrath.

Romans 4:17-22: 17. *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who [is giving life to] the (spiritually) dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were.* 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.* 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 (Heb 11:17-19);* 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.* Abraham did not have a Bible (the law), yet he kept God's verbal instructions (Gen 26:5), and the reason he is considered the father of our faith. The more we allow God to circumcise our hearts with His viewpoint, the more sensitive we become to the still small voice we have so easily ignored in the past.

Romans 4:23-25: 23. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;* 24. *But [for the sake of] 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 [because of] our offences, and was raised again [for the sake of] our justification. [correct Greek] The crucifixion of Jesus happened because of the perverted understanding of the expected Messiah, which is a type of every person having done the same thing spiritually. Those who teach the Trinity and Oneness doctrines, teach that Jesus raised himself from the dead. However, there are over twenty verses that say that God the Father raised him (cf Gal 1:1). Imputed righteousness is defined (in verse 17) as God calling those things which be not as though they were. It is for those who believe on Him that raised up Jesus. The gospel begins with an understanding the Father and the Son. Amen.*