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Series: The Book of Romans

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION: THE WAY FOR THE WORLD TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD

(98)

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[Romans 3:21-5:21](#)

(Continuation from 11/04/18)

C. Logic: The Evidence that Faith Alone Justifies a Man, [Romans 4:1-8](#)

[Romans 4:1-8 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

³For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

⁸BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

See at the end of this study [DEEPER STUDY # 1 \(Romans 4:1-25\) Abraham— Jews, the Seed— Justification— Righteousness— New Creation](#) see below for more discussion.

[\(Romans 4:1-8\) Introduction](#): In the 1960-70's, there was a popular game show on television that aired every day at 12:30 p.m. called "*Let's Make a Deal!*" with **Monty Hall**. The contestants would pick door number 1, 2, or 3 to try and win a grand prize and avoid the bogus prize.

The attitude of people today is like the people on that game show. Some believe they will enter Heaven by making a deal with God. Others think that no matter what door they choose, there are many ways to Heaven. That is not true.

Romans chapter four is a pivotal, crucial chapter in the Bible because it very carefully explains that no matter how good or famous you are, you do not work your way to Heaven or make deals with God for salvation. The chapter does explain very clearly how to go to Heaven. The way to Heaven is not in catechism, confirmation, communion, confessing to a priest, in

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candles being burnt, or in contributions to the poor or to the church. The way to Heaven is only through Jesus Christ as we will see.

If there is any doctrine that the chief enemy of man and of God desires to undercut and distort, it is the doctrine of salvation. If Satan can cause confusion and error in regard to that doctrine, he has succeeded in keeping men in their sin and under divine judgment and condemnation, which the unredeemed will one day share with Satan and his demonic angels in the eternal torment of hell.

Every false religion of the world—whether a heretical branch of Christianity, a highly developed pagan religion, or primitive animism—is founded on some form of salvation by works. Without exception, they teach that, by one means or another, man can become right with deity by attaining righteousness in his own power.

The entire **fourth chapter of Romans** is devoted to Abraham, whom Paul uses as an illustration of the central biblical truth that man can become right with God only by faith in response to His grace, and never by works. [Verses 6-8](#) pertain to David, but Paul is simply using David as an illustration to substantiate what he is teaching about Abraham.

We can assume several reasons for Paul's choosing Abraham as the supreme example of salvation by faith. **First**, Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Paul wrote this letter, demonstrating that the principle of salvation by faith rather than by works was not new in Judaism.

Abraham was the first and foremost Hebrew patriarch. He lived more than six hundred years before the Old Covenant was established through Moses. He therefore lived long before the law was given and obviously could not have been saved by obedience to it.

Second, Paul used Abraham as an example of salvation by faith simply because he was a human being. Until this point in Romans, Paul has been speaking primarily about theological truths in the abstract. In Abraham he gives a flesh and blood illustration of justification by faith.

The third, and doubtless most important, reason Paul used Abraham as the example of justification by faith was that, although rabbinical teaching and popular Jewish belief were contrary to Scripture as far as the *basis* of Abraham's righteousness was concerned, they agreed that Abraham was the Old Testament's supreme example of a godly, righteous man who is acceptable to the Lord. He is the biblical model of genuine faith and godliness.

The majority of Jews in Paul's day believed that Abraham was made right with God because of his own righteous character. They believed God chose Abraham to be the father of His people Israel because Abraham was the most righteous man on earth during his time. Like many cults today, they took certain scriptural passages and twisted or interpreted them out of context in order to support their preconceived ideas.

The rabbis, for example, pointed out that the Lord told Isaac,

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Genesis 26:4-5 (NASB)

⁴“I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

⁵ because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.”

They pointed out that the Lord called Abraham “My friend” ([Isaiah 41:8](#)).

Isaiah 41:8 (NASB)

⁸“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend.”

[Habakkuk 2:4](#) was often rendered, “The just shall live by his faithfulness,” rather than “by his faith.”

Habakkuk 2:4 (NASB)

⁴“Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.”

Instead of understanding faithfulness as being a fruit of faith, they had the notion that justification could be earned through one’s efforts to be faithful. In the same way, the rabbis interpreted [Genesis 15:6](#) as referring to Abraham’s faithfulness rather than to his faith.

Genesis 15:6 (NASB)

⁶“Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Several Jewish apocryphal books taught that Abraham was justified by keeping God’s law. In *Ecclesiasticus* (also known as *The Wisdom of Sirach*), Abraham is said to have become right with God because of his obedience ([Sirach 44:19-21](#) Vulgate Version).

The Prayer of Manasseh even asserted Abraham’s sinlessness: “Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who did not sin against thee” ([v. 8](#)).

In *The Book of Jubilees* the writer says, “Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life” ([23:10](#)).

Some rabbinical writings claimed that Abraham was so inherently good that he began serving God when he was three years old and that he was one of seven righteous men who had the privilege of bringing back the Shekinah glory to the Tabernacle.

By using Abraham as the supreme scriptural example of justification, or salvation, by *faith alone*, Paul was storming the very citadel of traditional Judaism. By demonstrating that Abraham was not justified by works, the apostle demolished the foundation of rabbinical teaching—that man is made right with God by keeping the law, that is, on the basis of his own religious efforts and works. If Abraham was not and could not have been justified by keeping the law, then no one could be.

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Conversely, if Abraham was justified solely on the basis of his faith in God, then everyone else must be justified in the same way, since Abraham is the biblical standard of a righteous man.

Introduction: most people think they become acceptable to God by doing the best they can. Most actually believe they secure God's approval by being reasonably good: by being a respectable and upright citizen and by occasionally helping others who are less fortunate. But note a startling fact: a man is not justified by works, but by faith. Logic proves the fact.

1. **The logic of Abraham's justification (v.1-3).**
2. **The logic of the worker or laborer (v.4-5).**
3. **The logic of David's "blessed man" (v.6-8).**

1. (Romans 4:1-3) Abraham— Righteousness— Justification— Works vs. Faith: the logic of Abraham's justification.

Romans 4:1-3 (NASB)

¹ **What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?**

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 CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."**

Paul says, "**What then shall we say.**" This phrase ties Abraham to the previous chapter. It ties Abraham to "**faith.**" Paul uses Abraham to illustrate a key truth of the Bible... a man is made right with God by faith in Christ, not works. He uses Abraham to show this truth.

Salvation by faith in the Lord is not a new concept. Abraham was the first patriarch and an example of godliness to the Jews. He was a model of righteousness. Abraham lived before the Law of God was ever given. He was not saved by the deeds of the Law, but by faith in Christ. Using Abraham as an object lesson, Paul addresses the issue of works and faith.

A person can look at Abraham's life and logically see that a man is not justified by works but by faith.

1. Abraham was not justified by works, for works *cannot qualify* a person to glory before God.

Now note this: if Abraham had been justified by works...

- a) he *would be* qualified to glory before men.
- b) but he *would not be* qualified to glory before God.

Think about it—the logic, the clarity of the matter. No man is ever qualified to glory before God. No act or work or combination of acts and works could ever elevate man to such a height that he could glory or become qualified before God.

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2. Abraham was justified by believing God. What happened was this. Abraham believed God, and God took Abraham's belief and counted his belief as righteousness. It was not Abraham's works, but his faith that God took and counted as righteousness. It was all an act of God; therefore, all glory belonged to God, not to Abraham. Man is saved by faith; that is, God takes a man's faith and counts that man's faith as righteousness.

Such has to be the case.

- a) God is perfect; He is perfectly righteous. No man can achieve perfection; therefore, no man can live in the presence of God.
- b) However, God is love. So what God does is take a person's faith (any person's faith who is truly sincere) and counts that faith as righteousness, as perfection. Therefore, a man is able to live in God's presence by faith or justification.

Matthew 7:22-23 (NASB)

²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

Romans 3:20 (NASB)

²⁰ "Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin."

Galatians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God.

⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Titus 3:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ "But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared,

⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

Thought 1. Why does God justify a man through faith?

There are at **least two reasons.**

First, God loves everyone with a perfect love. God wants everyone to live with Him in a *perfect state of being* throughout all eternity. God is perfect; therefore, He alone can provide the only perfect way for man to live in His presence. Because God is love, He has reached out for man by providing that perfect way through Jesus Christ, His Son.

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John 3:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

John 5:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

Romans 5:8 (NASB)

⁸ “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 Peter 3:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

Second, God loves His Son with a perfect love. Any person who honors God’s Son by believing in Him is accepted by God. That is, God takes that person’s belief and counts it as righteousness. The person receives the right to live in God’s presence in a *perfect state of being*. “We have obtained an inheritance...that we should be” (a state of *being* that is to be eternally lived to the praise of God’s glory—[Ephesians 1:11-12](#)).

Ephesians 1:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ “Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”

Matthew 17:5 (NASB)

⁵ “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

John 10:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.”

John 15:9 (NASB)

⁹ “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”

John 16:27 (NASB)

²⁷ “For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”

John 17:23 (NASB)

²³ “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

John 17:26 (NASB)

²⁶ “And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

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Ephesians 1:6 (NASB)

⁶“To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

Colossians 1:13 (NASB)

¹³“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”