





Romans 4: 6—“David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup>“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup>Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” <sup>9</sup>Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. <sup>10</sup>Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! <sup>11</sup>And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. <sup>12</sup>And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. <sup>13</sup>It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>14</sup>For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, <sup>15</sup>because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. <sup>16</sup>Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup>As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. <sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>19</sup>Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup>Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup>The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup>He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

**<sup>6</sup>David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup>“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup>Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”**

- Verses 1-3 and 6-8 are examples of what 3:21 is speaking of when it says, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, *to which the Law and the Prophets testify.*”

**<sup>9</sup>Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised?**

**We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. <sup>10</sup>Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before?**

- **Genesis 15: 6**—“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”
- **Genesis 17**—the covenant of circumcision

**It was not after, but before! <sup>11</sup>And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.**

- If we want to share in the promise to Abraham we must get it through Abraham. But what if you (and I) are not descendants of Abraham (i.e., we're not Jewish)?
- One becomes a descendant of Abraham only by sharing his trust, not his genes.
- One shares Abraham's patrimony by sharing his faith or one does not share the patrimony at all.

**So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.**

- Abraham is the father of all who are justified by faith
  - Why does Paul turn to Abraham?
    - The immediate reaction of the Jews was, “This is something entirely new and a contradiction of all that we have been taught to believe. This doctrine is completely incredible.”
      - Paul's answer is, “So far from being new, this doctrine is as old as the Jewish faith. So far from being a heretical novelty, it is the very basis of Jewish religion.”
        - 3:21 “to which the law and the prophets testify”
  - Large numbers of the Rabbis turned the story of Abraham to suit their own beliefs. They held that because he was the only righteous man of his generation, therefore he was chosen to be the ancestor of God's special people.
    - Joshua 24:2
  - The immediate answer is, “But how could Abraham keep the law when he lived hundreds of years before it was give?”
    - The Rabbis advanced the odd theory that he kept it by intuition or anticipation.

- *Apocalypse of Baruch 57:2*: “At that time, the unwritten law was named among them and the works of the commandment were then fulfilled.”
- *Ecclesiasticus 44:20-21*: “He kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with God.”
- If a Gentile accepted the Jewish faith, he could not enter into it fully without three things—
  1. Baptism,
  2. Sacrifice and,
  3. Circumcision.
- Circumcision was not the gate into righteousness, it was only the sign.
  - So literally did some of the Rabbis take this that they actually said that, if a Jew was so bad that he had to be condemned by God, there was an angel whose task it was to make him uncircumcised again before he entered into punishment.

<sup>12</sup>**And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.**

- Within the framework of faith, the law was God’s gift of order and, hence, a gift of grace.
- The problem with the law does not rest with the law but with sin and what sin does through the law.
- We use the law to make us think we do not need to rely on mercy but can, somehow, make it under our own power, as it were.
- It lets us think we can, somehow establish our worth in such a way that we do not need God’s mercy. We want that ‘boast before God’ that not even Abraham could muster.
- In short, we want to do what only God can do: Furnish the grounds for our being declared righteous and hence acceptable to God.
- Clearly **the fundamental sin of idolatry is again at work.**
- **Achtemeier**: “Idolatry is at work wherever we assert our worthiness to be saved or deny the firm hold of sin on all our human virtues. It is idolatry because, in doing that, we show we want a god different from the God we know in Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>
- He was justified before he ever did any of the works of the law.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Achtemeier, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Romans* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1985), p. 80.

- Whereas the basic thought of the Jew was that man must earn God's favor.
  - Like the laborers, we begrudge generosity to others.
  - We are acceptable to God only because of his mercy, not because of our own value,
    - This is the testimony that is so difficult for the human heart to say.
- <sup>13</sup>It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.**
- The promise that God made to Abraham was a promise that was carried on, not through the law, but through faith.
- <sup>14</sup>For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,**
- See verse 3:20, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."
- <sup>15</sup>because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.**
- The very concept of sin is the lack of conformity to a standard. Therefore, where there is no standard there can be no lack of conformity.
    - Without the concept of good, there can be no concept of evil. Evil is predicated upon the idea of good.
- <sup>16</sup>Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.**
- Not by merit (deserve, justify, warrant, earn, be worthy of, rate, be entitled to), but by grace.
    - There are two Greek words which mean promise.
      - *Huposchesis* means a promise which is entered into upon conditions.
        - "I promise to do this, if you promise to do that."
      - *Epaggelia* means a promise made out of the goodness of someone's heart quite unconditionally.
      - It is *epaggelia* that Paul uses.
  - The trouble about law has always been that it can diagnose the malady but cannot effect a cure.
    - It shows a man where he goes wrong, but does not help him to avoid going wrong.
  - When you think of law we must also think of transgression, inevitably the next thought is wrath.

- If you think God in terms of law and you cannot do other than think of him in terms of outraged justice.
- Think of man in terms of law and you cannot do other than think of him as destined for the condemnation of God
  - This is why we must die to the law.

- Romans 7

**<sup>17</sup>As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.**

- The promises of God are not limited to Israel
  - If we have placed our trust for our standing before God in the work of Jesus Christ, Abraham is our father.
  - The second half of the verse the apostle breaks into a brief doxology.

**<sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”**

- Paul begins to speak of the strength, and tenacity of Abraham’s (authentic) faith.
  - More than mere profession, real faith, real trust.

**<sup>19</sup>Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup>Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.**

- Abraham was a realist. Praise God!
  - Abraham’s faith clung to the promises of God, not his own subjectivity. He believed only in the spoken Word of God.
    - Just as ours must be.
  - Abraham’s faith was active. In the face of overwhelming circumstances, “He gave glory to God.”

**<sup>22</sup>This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup>The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.**

- This was not meant to be an isolated incident. Abraham was a prototype as the father of the faithful. All are justified in precisely the same way...through the imputation of righteousness of Christ to our account.

**<sup>25</sup>He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

- **Piper:** “The demands of God for entrance into eternal life are not merely that our unrighteousness be canceled, but that our perfect righteousness be established.”<sup>2</sup>
  1. The death of Christ paid the debt of our unrighteousness.
  2. The obedience of Christ provided the righteousness we needed to be justified in God’s court.
  - **Romans 5:19:** “<sup>19</sup>For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”
  - **Philippians 2:8:** “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”
- In verse 17 it says, “He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead;” and in verse 19 it says, “he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.”
  - The point being that Abraham believed in a resurrecting God; just as with us.
  - Abraham’s trust was the means by which he was justified; just as with us.
- **Matthew Henry:** “This last verse is an abridgement or summary of the whole gospel.”<sup>3</sup>
- **Schreiner:** “To say that Jesus was raised because of justification is to say that his resurrection authenticates and confirms that our justification has been secured. The resurrection of Christ constitutes evidence that his work on our behalf has been completed. The death and resurrection of Christ fulfill the promise of universal blessing made to Abraham, for they are the means by which all peoples enter into the new people of God.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Piper:** “Whose sin was condemned when Jesus’ flesh was tortured and killed? God condemned sin in the flesh of his completely innocent Son. Whose sin? The answer is given clearly. Romans 4:25, “He . . . was delivered over because of *our* transgressions.” 1 Corinthians 15:3, “Christ died for *our* sins according to the Scriptures.” Galatians 1:4, “[He] gave Himself for *our* sins.” 1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore *our* sins in his body on the tree.” 1 Peter 3:18, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for *the unrighteous*.” Isaiah 53:5-6, “But He was pierced through for *our* transgressions, He was crushed for *our*

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Bible*, <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getCommentaryText&cid=53&source=2&seq=i.52.4.3>.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), p. 244.

iniquities; The chastening for *our* well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."<sup>5</sup>

- The Final cry of Christ from the cross was: "It is finished!"
- It was the cry of victory, not defeat.
- **Illustration:** William Wallace from *Braveheart*. His final cry just before his death (as they were disemboweling him): "**Freedom!!**"
- **Moo:** "Particularly striking...is the connection made between Christ's resurrection and our justification...As Jesus' death provides the necessary grounds on which God's justifying action can proceed, so his resurrection, by vindicating Christ and freeing him forever from the influence of sin (cf. 6:10), provides for the ongoing power over sins experienced by the believer in union with Christ."<sup>6</sup>
- **Piper:** "By his death he paid the penalty for our sins and purchased our acquittal, our justification, our forgiveness. And since the achievement of the cross was so complete and the work of our justification so decisive, God raised Jesus from the dead to validate our forgiveness and to vindicate his Son's righteousness and to celebrate the work of justification."<sup>7</sup>
- **John Piper:** "In other words, the resurrection of Jesus is the proof that his death was sufficient to cover all our transgressions."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/01/101401.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 289-90.

<sup>7</sup> John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/01/101401.html>.

<sup>8</sup> John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/01/101401.html>.