

Abraham's Faith

Today we start our journey through Romans chapter 4. I know I have not exhaustively covered chapter 3. But, the topics not yet fully covered there will be revisited in chapter 5.

As an introduction to chapter 4, let us get our Bibles out and read the entire chapter. Please note that this chapter is about Abraham and his faith.

Now, how did we get here? Romans 3:27-30 sets the topic for Paul to provide an illustration.

Romans 3:27 Where then is boasting? (see Romans 4:2) It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works (see Romans 4:6)of the Law.

Romans 3:29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, (see Romans 9-12)

Romans 3:30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. (see Romans 4:16-23)

**Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8**

Romans
3:21-30
Principle



Romans 4
Application:
Illustration

Herman looked at Romans chapter 4 as an illustration of righteousness¹. Here is his outline.

Illustration of Righteousness 4:1-25

1. Abraham is imputed righteousness apart from works 4:1-8

Romans 4:6 ...apart from works...(same wording as Romans 3:28)

2. Abraham is imputed righteousness apart from circumcision/uncircumcision (system of performance) 4:9-12

Romans 4:11 ...uncircumcised...without being circumcised... (Romans 3:30 uncircumcised)

3. Abraham is imputed righteousness apart from the Law. 4:13-15

Romans 4:13 ...not through the Law...(Romans 3:28 apart from the works of the Law)

4. Abraham is imputed righteousness by faith alone in Christ alone. 4:16-25

Romans 4:16 For (Therefore: a conclusion) this reason (righteousness) it is by (or out from) faith...

Look at a visual outline:

¹ <https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Romans/m3u/20100919Romans133.m3u>

Abraham's Faith Romans 4:1-8

4 What then shall we say that Abraham, ^{1a}our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²For if Abraham was justified ^{1b}by works, he has something to boast about, but not ^{1c}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 LAWS AND DEEDS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED, AND WHOSE SIN HAVE BEEN COVERED."
8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

⁹Is this blessing then on ^{9a}the circumcised, or on ^{9b}the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." ¹⁰How then was it credited to him who was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while ^{10a}circumcised, but while ^{10b}uncircumcised, ¹¹and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which ^{11a}he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, ¹²and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which ^{11b}he had while uncircumcised.

¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not ^{13a}through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

¹⁶For this reason *it is* ^{16a}by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the ^{16b}descendants, not only to ^{16c}those who are of the Law, but also to ^{16d}those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HE MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR ^{18a}DESCENDANTS BE." ¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. ²²Therefore *IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.* ²³Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Apart from Works
Not Circumcision
Not Through Law
Faith

It is interesting to note that Paul does not use the same means to say “apart” from for circumcision and Law. In verse 6 he uses the Greek for “without” or “apart” from works. In verse 11 he says “not in/by uncircumcision” or “not circumcised.” In verse 13 he says “not through the Law.” Paul obviously made these three “paragraphs” in his argument. But by using different words to set up the parallelism, he separates them as three different reasons culminating in faith alone.

From Herman: “Let us ask the question, this is a Bible Church, “Why does Paul spend this time on Abraham?” It is a fair question. He is writing to the believers in Rome. Why does he spend this time on Abraham?

“There were those who were teaching that Gentiles in Rome must become Jewish proselytes in order to be justified, righteous. We use the word “saved.” “Saved” is not a big Jewish word. They talk about being righteous, being justified before God. There were those who taught that the Gentiles, if you were a Gentile, you must become a Jewish proselyte in order to saved. Become righteous before God which meant you had to

Abraham's Faith Romans 4:1-8

be circumcised. That is what they were teaching. They were basing their claims for circumcision on the promise made to Abraham that it was his “seed” and that if it was not of the seed of Abraham by natural birth they would have to come under circumcision. That is what they were teaching.²”

I want to go back to Herman's question, “Why does Paul spend this time on Abraham?” As time goes on, yes, we will look at the four paragraphs 1) apart from works 2) apart from circumcision 3) apart from the Law and 4) By faith alone in Christ alone.

But Paul spends an ENTIRE chapter of Romans focused on Abraham. Why? What makes Abraham so important? Not just for the Jews but also for ALL believers. In Romans 3:28, Paul used generic “man.” Any man. All men. But in chapter 4, Paul picks one man to represent this “any man” to illustrate the principle of faith.

Before we get into the text of Romans chapter 4, there are two topics that need to be covered: 1) the importance of Abraham and 2) the importance of Paul's quote from Genesis 15:6.

Importance of Abraham

1. Jews referred to Abraham as “father.”

John 8:39 They answered and said to Him (to Jesus), “Abraham is our father.” Jesus *said to them, “If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

As physical father to Isaac and Jacob, he was ancestor to all Jews. They all trace their genealogies back to him. Look at the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. They both include

2 <https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Romans/m3u/20100919Romans133.m3u>

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

Abraham. Anything given to Abraham ultimately flows down to his children.

2. Abraham is also father spiritually to all who believe, not just to Jews.

Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

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

Galatians 3:7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (In Romans Paul emphasizes that the principle of faith applies to both Jew and Gentile.)

Abraham was a Gentile before he became a “Jew.” He expressed faith before he became a Jew. Hence, as a Gentile the principle of faith applied to him.

3. The Old Testament calls Abraham a “friend” of God.

2 Chronicles 20:7 (Jehoshaphat speaking) **Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?**

**Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8**

Isaiah 41:8 “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend,

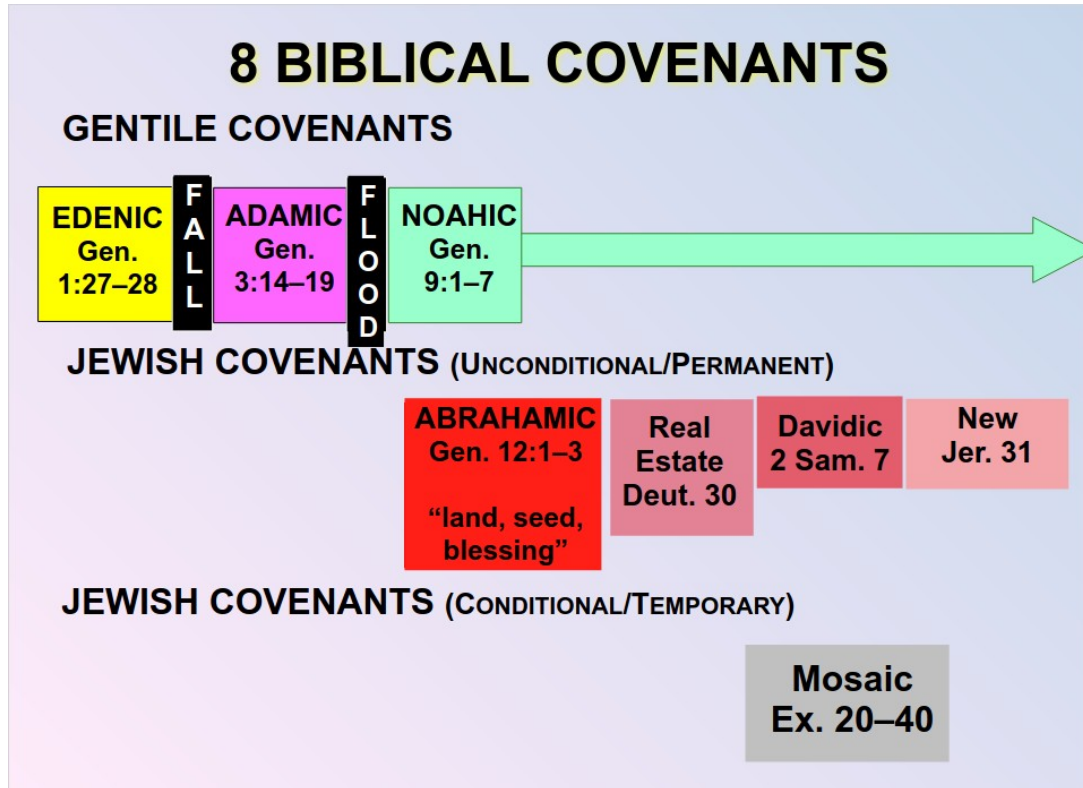
James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.

Abraham, as “friend of God” is obviously important to God and was endowed with special blessings through the covenants.

4. Abraham was the recipient of land, seed and blessing in a covenant with God. These covenant “paragraphs” were repeated to Isaac and Jacob and hence to the Hebrew (Jewish) people. Abraham is the beginning of these covenant blessings. Illustration is from Robby Dean.³

3 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2014-GPAges-008b.pdf>

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8



The Abrahamic Covenant resulted in three other covenants: 1) “Real Estate” or “Land Covenant” sometimes called the Palestinian Covenant, 2) Davidic Covenant and the 3) New Covenant.

Abraham is used as a documented example. But he is not just any example. He was the father of the Jews. He was held in high regard by the Jews. The Jews in Rome had probably evangelized Gentiles who became believers. But as Herman stated, the Jews wanted to enforce the Law on the Gentile believers to the point that they had to 1) perform works to demonstrate their conversion, 2) become circumcised and 3) follow the Law. This was a problem for the early church. So much so that there was a council in Jerusalem to address this issue:

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

So if Abraham was the epitome of being a Jew, then if Abraham was justified by faith, then from the major to the minor argument applied. If Abraham is THE JEW, then all lesser people, Jews and Gentiles should follow his pattern.

The second topic that needs to be covered in Pauls quote of Genesis 15:6

Paul points us in the right direction when he quotes from Genesis. Yes, here we go again, back to the book of beginnings.

**Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord;
and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**

**Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say?
"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to
him as righteousness." (Quoted from the LXX.
Paul uses the LXX to fit into his argument. The
meaning has not changed.)**

There are many aspects of this verse in Genesis that strike the reader.

This is the first time in the Bible that the words "believed," "reckoned" and righteousness are used. Yes, the first mention of each of these words. I had to think about that for a while. First mentions are always important. But here in the first book in our Bibles is the principle of justification by faith!

Thomas Constable quotes Mounce on this verse (Genesis 15:6):

"In the middle of this chapter occurs what is perhaps the most important verse in the entire Bible: Genesis 15:6. In it, the doctrine of justification by faith is set forth for the first time. This is the first verse in the Bible explicitly to speak of (1) 'faith,' (2) 'righteousness,' and (3) 'justification.'"

**Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8**

It is interesting to note that Paul quotes this verse which was written by Moses about Abraham.

Paul→ Moses→ Abraham

1. First mention of the doctrine of justification by faith is associated with Abraham. Certainly Adam and Noah and others had faith. But this is the first mention.

2. Here is something that interested me when I thought about this verse. It is quoted three times in the New Testament:

We are dealing with the quote in Romans 4:3 concerning justification (salvation) by faith. Phase 1 salvation.

Previously written by Paul was the letter to the Galatians.

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

What is the context in which this quote is used?

Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Galatians 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Paul is talking about the life after salvation. He is talking about walking by faith and resultant blessings in time. Phase 2 salvation.

James quotes this verse from Genesis in his letter.

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God.

Here, in the letter of James, the author says that faith will produce works by the Spirit. From a Jewish perspective, works demonstrated that a person had faith. We understand that faith dependence on the Holy Spirit results in “filling of the Holy Spirit.” As a result there is the fruit of the Spirit. There is “production” produced by the Holy Spirit, not by human effort. These result in blessing. Not stated here, but we know that works produced by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit are rewarded in eternity. Phase 3 salvation.

Why? Faith is our connection to God. We trust Him. That frees God to bless us in grace without perverting His Righteousness.

Now a quick warning. There are conservative Christians who say that you do not know you are saved unless you produce works and continue to produce works. In other words, they misread James to say that works are a necessary part of justification salvation/Phase 1. For them, works is

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

a necessary demonstration or confirmation of salvation. That is not how we understand the Bible. The only requirement for salvation is faith. Paul says this in Romans chapter 4 and other places.

1. Genesis is a foundational book.
2. Genesis 15:6 is the first time certain Hebrew vocabulary words are used: believed (faith alone), reckoned (imputation) and righteousness (resulting in justification). That was surprising to me. Not Adam, not Noah but Abraham was the first for these words. This does not mean that Noah didn't believe. His belief was demonstrated by his response to God's commands. Adam is associated with the sin that led to the need for salvation. Abraham was a pivotal person.

It was to Abraham that the "Abrahamic" covenant was given: the land, the seed and the blessing. Jews are descendants of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob. Jews revere Abraham more than Moses.

Let us peak at some vocabulary Paul uses in Romans including Romans 4:1

Romans 3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) 3:6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?

Romans 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

flesh, has found? 4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Romans 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Abraham's Faith
Romans 4:1-8

What shall we say? This question/phrase is used seven times in the New Testament. All of those usages are in the book of Romans.