

## Studies in Romans

### Abraham – Justified by Faith! (4:1-5)

#### Context

- **1:1-17 Introduction**
- **1:18-4:25 The problem and God’s solution**
  - **3:21-4:25 God’s solution: justification by faith**
    - 3:21-26 God has revealed a way by which he justly makes people righteous through Jesus’ death if they have faith in Him
    - 3:27-4:25 Faith is what God has always wanted – it is the only means by which a person may inherit God’s promises
- **5:1-8:39 What it means to be justified by faith**

So far, Paul has expounded the problem (which is?) and now he is “on the solution side.”

*What verses marks the “turning point” in Paul’s line of argument?*

Last week we noted three implications that flow out of the fact that we are justified by grace when we put our faith in Christ’s work on our behalf.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is excluded (**3:27**)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are eliminated (**3:29-30**)
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is established (**3:31**)

Now we get to **chapter 4** and **chapter 4** isn’t a new section. It just follows right on from the end of the previous chapter. Remember that Paul has already made the point that this gospel, this idea of righteousness by faith, is upheld by the Old Testament. See **Rom. 1:2** and **3:21**. So Paul now calls Abraham to the witness stand...

Abraham is a hugely important figure in the Old Testament. Here are three reasons why:

#### 1. He was chosen by God.

See **Gen. 12:1-3**.

#### 2. God’s promises.

*What promises did God make to Abraham?* See **Gen. 12** and **Gen. 15**.

#### 3. Abraham’s response.

See **Gen. 15:2-6**.

The question: **Romans 4:1-2**. *What is Paul asking?*

Paul agrees that, if in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he would have had something to boast about. *But not before God...*

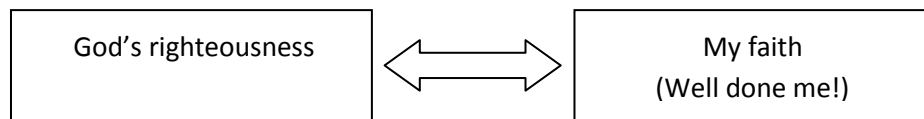
We know that Abraham had no cause to boast because of the Scripture that Paul quotes (from **Gen. 15:6**).

Question: *how and when did Abraham get right with God?*

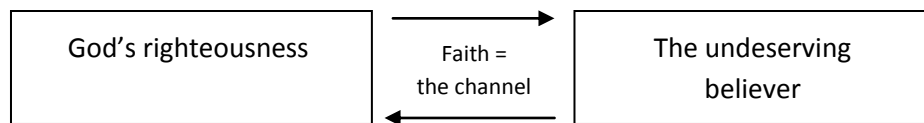
Now, three things about this.

1. Abraham didn't just "have faith" as this kind of abstract quality often spoken of these days ("We're part of a people of faith," etc.). No, by "faith" we see that this means Abraham believed God's actual promises... See **2 Cor. 1:20**.
2. Abraham's faith was "counted to him." It was put on his account. The word "counted" (or NIV – "credited") means to be reckoned or imputed. It occurs in **vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23 and 24**. It's a word that speaks of the legal decision of God to count righteousness to Abraham.
3. When the verse says that Abraham's faith was "counted" to him as righteousness, this doesn't mean that Abraham and God did a swap. No, it means that faith is the *channel* by which the undeserved righteousness of God is credited to a sinner.

It's not a swap!



But faith is the channel:



### **An analogy:**

In **v. 4** Paul uses a very simple analogy from everyday life... *Explain!*

What happened to Abraham (**v. 5**) is that "to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness..." His faith was *counted as* righteousness.

### **Lessons from Abraham (by Michael Eaton):**

1. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation is a matter of grace.**

See **Josh. 24:2**

2. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation comes by faith, by trusting God's promise.**
3. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation comes by being given a righteousness that is not our own.**
4. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation is by faith alone; no human contribution is made.**

5. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation is for Gentiles.**
6. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation is not an invention of Paul or even of Jesus.**
7. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation is without the law.**
8. **The story of Abraham confirms that salvation comes in a way that excludes boasting.**

See **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

## **For further discussion**

(Perhaps choose one or more to think about further or to discuss in a group)

- *How does this passage flow on from 3:21-26?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- *This passage focuses on faith. What does the world think faith is? Who does it think has faith?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- *What are the main ways by which Abraham was not made righteous?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- *What did Abraham discover about boasting and getting right with God?*