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Romans 48 Justified NOT by Works - Abraham

Romans 4:1-8, *What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 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 accounted to him for righteousness." ⁴Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁷"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."*

Romans, from chapter 3 verse 21 on to chapter 8 Paul is talking about that God has provided a salvation is provided by Christ through His work as a free gift to those who believe, not by their own works.

It is foreign to the Jews who believed you earned your way into heaven. It was even foreign to the pagans whose systems of religion have always been religions of human achievement.

Contrary to what the Jews have always been taught that you are saved by earning your way in.

Having taught salvation by grace through faith in Romans 3:21-31, Paul now illustrates it. Paul selects Abraham as his illustration.

Abraham becomes the classic model, and illustration of salvation by grace through faith.

Abraham, who is the father of the nation Israel.

The whole fourth chapter is about Abraham. It begins and ends about Abraham.

Abraham was God's specially chosen man. Through his loins would come the Messiah, He is the model of faith.

He is the model of the right kind of approach to God.

He is the model of true salvation.

Very frequently in the Bible Abraham called "the friend of God."

2 Chronicles 20:7, *Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?*

Isaiah 41:8, *“But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.*

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

Abraham is called the friend of God. That's a marvellous designation.

In fact, several times in the Scripture, God, who is the creator of the universe and the creator of all men, is called "the God of Abraham," as if being the God of Abraham was being something special.

More than twelve chapters in Genesis are devoted to the life of this man, Abraham.

Why Abraham?

Abraham would show the eternal truth of righteousness by grace through faith since Abraham was an Old Testament character.

By using Abraham, Paul is saying this is nothing new, this is something very old.

Abraham even preceded Moses.

Abraham even preceded the identity of the nation Israel.

Abraham really belongs in the patriarchal period, the very primitive time.

He appears early in the book of Genesis.

If Paul can establish that a man in the book of Genesis was saved by grace through faith and not of works, then he has given to us a timeless truth and nothing new at all.

Abraham is also the supreme example of faith. Nobody in the Old Testament exercised as much or more faith than Abraham. The New Testament even tells us that is the father of all who believe. All who come to God by faith are children of Abraham, who sort of set the standard for faith by believing God in a most incredible way.

This is contrary to the rabbis' teaching. Most rabbis at the time of Paul and the time of our Lord in Jewish history believed that Abraham was made right with God because of his character.

He was the best man in the world in his generation. Therefore, he was chosen by God to be the father of His people Israel.

They say Abraham was a righteous man and that's why God chose him.

How could any man be righteous at God's standard level?

How could a man keep God's righteous standard when it hadn't been given yet?

They answer back, he kept it by intuition and anticipation. He sensed in his conscience the law of God and he kept it as he anticipated it and he kept it intuitively.

So, the rabbis said he was the best man, he was a good man. He was a righteous man on his own terms therefore God chose him because of his self-righteousness.

So, Paul selects Abraham to destroy this myth, to wipe out the Jewish illusion and establish the truth that Abraham is not an example of a righteous man whom God chose, he is an example of an unrighteous man whom God chose.

He is not an example of a man who earned salvation by his good works but by grace through believing.

In simple child-like trust, in complete yielded to God, he took God's word at face value, believed God. By that act of faith he received righteousness.

Romans chapter 4 can be divided up by three ways.

1. Justification by Faith not by works (V1-8)
2. Justification by Grace not Law (9-17)
3. Justification by God's power not human effort. (18-25)

If Abraham couldn't be justified by works then nobody can be because they said he was the most righteous man of all.

If Abraham cannot be justified by his works, then nobody can.

If it can be demonstrated that Abraham was justified by faith, then everyone must be justified by faith for Abraham is the standard.

If Abraham can't glory and boast, then nobody can because it must be of grace.

Wrong notion of Abraham's righteousness.

The reason that they believed that Abraham was righteous is because they picked certain scriptures, turned, and twisted certain scriptures to come to their own conclusion.

Genesis 26:5, *because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."*

Abraham did all that.

What they don't say is that is not why God saved him made him righteous but that is because God saved him and made him righteous.

Isaiah 41:8, *“But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.*

They also draw from the book of Ecclesiasticus, which is an apocryphal book, not to be confused with Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiasticus, that spurious non-inspired book taught that Abraham was given justification, or made right with God, justified, and he was given circumcision because he earned it by keeping the law.

The rabbis also taught that Abraham was one of the seven men who by his merit and by his personal righteousness had the privilege of bringing back the Shekinah glory to dwell in the tabernacle.

The rabbis also taught that Abraham was so righteous he began to serve God when he was three years old.

They quote from the prayer of Manasseh, which is another writing, a non-biblical writing, says: *"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, but Thou hast appointed repentance for me who am a sinner."

You have not appointed repentance for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who did not sin.

Now when we go through Genesis there is no way we will come to that conclusion, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob didn't sin.

The rabbis said because Abraham was perfect, righteous from the time he was three he served God and because he wasn't a sinner, God chose him and made him the head of the nation.

Habakkuk 2:4, *"Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."*

They twisted the scripture from faith to faithfulness!

So, because of all this teaching that Abraham was righteous before God on the basis of his own personal righteousness, Paul has to attack Abraham.

Paul must disprove that because Abraham became the standard and then the Jews said that's the standard, so we all gain righteousness by living as Abraham in perfect obedience to the rules. So, they all tried to keep the law.

So, Abraham's faith must be made clear.

1. Justification by Faith not by works (V1-8)

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

Paul said this too before he was saved, was righteous by his own self-righteousness.

What about Abraham?

What has he pertaining to the flesh discovered?

Abraham is our father,

He is the father of the nation,

He is the one who would be called.

The father of the Abrahamic Covenant, he is the man of the covenant, he is the supreme one of all of God's people, the whole nation of Israel came out of his loins.

Therefore, whatever is true of him must be true of all of us as his seed.

What has Abraham as pertaining to the flesh found?

What does it mean "as pertaining to the flesh"?

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

Abraham can't open his mouth before God.

If Abraham was justified by works, then he has something about which to boast. If I save myself by being so good, then I have a right to say, I am so good I saved myself. But, from God's viewpoint he had no right to boast. He had no basis for pride, none.

Paul is going to prove that in the rest of the chapter. Abraham was not justified by his works.

Men are never made right with God by what they do.

You can go and light all the candles you want,
You can pray all the prayers you want,
You can go to all the religious meetings you want,
You can get baptized,
You can buy a Bible,
You can take Communion,
You can feel religious feelings,
You can go through all the religious exercises,
You can be a good person,
You can be a very good person,
You can be a goody-good person,

You can be so good that nobody even likes to be around you, but the sum of it all is you that cannot attain unto God's standard of righteousness.

Romans 3:27, *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

No one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Because salvation is designed to give glory to God, not glory to man.

How does Paul prove his point?

V 3, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

This verse is direct quote from **Genesis 15:6**.

"Righteousness" means to be right with God.

How did Abraham get right with God?

It wasn't that he was so good on his own that God just sort of had to accept him, but rather he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Galatians 3:6-9, *just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”⁷ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*

Abraham was saved by faith, not by works so that all who are saved by faith since Abraham are the children of Abraham.

Abraham sort of the father of all who exercise faith.

Galatians 3:26, *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

From Abraham on, anybody who is saved is saved by faith. To Paul then and to the Holy Spirit, the essence of Abraham's greatness was that God had chosen him, God had commanded him, and he believed Him.

Hebrews 11:8, *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

Now this is faith. He lived in the city, the Bible tells us, called Ur, the city of the Chaldees. He had his family, his possessions, his reputation, his business. His life was there.

There was no nation, Israel.

There was no promised land.

There were no people of God.

Yet God came and it says he was called that God was working over Abraham. When he was being called, he also obeyed.

That was a great act of faith because God said, get up and get out of Ur of the Chaldees and I want you to go somewhere else and I am not going to tell you where you are going, but you just abandon everything and leave.

So, he left the land of his birth, forsook his home, his estate, severed ties with those he loved, and he left, abandoning present security for future uncertainty.

That's faith.

Why did he do that?

Because he believed God.

He believed that God would fulfil His good promise and that God would take him to a good place and that God would bless his life. He believed that.

Hebrews 11:9, *By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;*

To God, Abraham was the chosen man.

Yet Abraham never really saw the fulfilment.

He never really saw the land unfold as the possession of God's people.

He never owned any land.

He spent his life as a tent dweller wandering around just like Isaac and Jacob did.

He never saw the fulfilment of his dreams. It was to be out of his loins that another generation would see that.

Yet always as he went, he believed.

Hebrews 11:10, *for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

He always had his eyes on God. He always had that heavenly perspective, that heavenly vision. So, his faith was a patient faith.

Hebrews 11:17, *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,*

In other words, he would kill the very fulfilment of the promise.

Why?

Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.

He said, look, if God says I am going to have a nation out of this child and God says kill him, then I kill him in confidence that God will raise him up.

Now that is a great faith.

Had Abraham ever seen a resurrection?

Never.

What a faith?

Go to a land you have never seen, have a child you cannot have, kill the child who is the hope of all the promise.

Abraham would have done it all, so great was his faith. He is a model of faith.

V 3, *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

How did he gain righteousness?

How was he made right with God?

How did he become acceptable with God?

Through his perfection?

No, through his faith.

Because he believed God enough to leave his country,

Because he believed God enough to trust God to give him a son,

Because he believed God enough to kill that son if God said, and believed that he would raise him from the dead, great faith.

The word "counted," very important word. It's the word ***logizomai***. That word is used eleven times in this section.

t means "to credit to one's account, to put to one's account, to reckon, to impute to one."

When you believe God, when you believe the Word of God and the promise of God then God takes a righteousness you don't have and puts it to your account.

We know Abraham sinned.

How could God give His righteousness to Abraham?

Isaiah 53:4, *Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.*

Do you know why God can credit righteousness to your account?

Because He credited your sin to Christ's account.

On the cross Christ paid the price for your sin, which then satisfies God's requirement and allows God to credit His righteousness to your account and mine.

That's the heart of the Christian faith.

God never ever could have credited righteousness to Abraham's account had not Abraham's sin been paid for.

It was on the cross of Jesus Christ, though Christ had not yet come into the world. That's no more difficult to understand than that our sin should be credited to Christ who came 2,000 years ago. He is the apex of redemptive history.

A person who's deeply convinced that he is lost,
who knows he is a rebel against God,
who knows he's a lawbreaker,
who knows he's condemned to hell, and
he knows he can't earn his own way in,
to discover that he doesn't have to, that God will impute righteousness.

God will credit righteousness to his account because his sin has been credited to Christ's account on the cross if he but believes. The foul character of sin and the inevitable deserved judgment becomes frontal in the mind and the awakened soul cries out for a salvation that he knows he can't earn.

He may cry.

Micah 6:6-7, *With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? ʹWill the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

Job 25:4, *How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?*

Answer is only through faith in Lord Jesus Christ!

