

Abraham Justified by Faith (*Part 2*)

Romans 4:1-25

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: Like Abraham, we do not have to work to earn a right standing before God; we must simply accept His gracious gift of righteousness by faith alone.

In Romans 3:28 the Apostle Paul set forth what would have been a very shocking claim for his Jewish readers: "For we maintain that a man is justified [before God] by faith apart from observing the law." The Jews were trusting in: 1) their ethnic relationship to Abraham; 2) their circumcision, which was the sign and seal of the covenant relationship between themselves and God; 3) the fact that they had received the Mosaic Law directly from God; and 4) their diligent efforts in observing the Law. So, in chapter four, Paul seeks to prove his assertion that a man is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ apart from the works of the Law. Using Father Abraham as his primary example, he argued that...

I. Abraham Was not Justified by Works (4:1-8)

- If anyone could earn salvation by their good works, it would have been Abraham!
- But Abraham placed his confidence in the promises of God and God credited his faith to him as righteousness.
- In response to Abraham's faith, God deposited His own righteousness to Abraham's account. It was his faith, not his works, that brought him into right relationship with God.
- Abraham's faith in God's promises manifested itself in obedience to God, but his good works did not earn God's salvation!
- Faith is not mysterious nor mystical; it is simply taking God at His Word, putting our trust in what He has revealed to us in His Word.

II. Abraham Was not Justified by Circumcision (4:9-12)

- Abraham was declared righteous by God in Genesis 15:6 *before* he was circumcised in Gen. 17; therefore, circumcision is not necessary to be in right standing before God!
- "Circumcision was the sign and seal of Abraham's righteousness that belonged to him by faith. In other words, circumcision documented and ratified the righteousness by faith that Abraham enjoyed *before* his circumcision." (*ESV Study Bible, p. 2164*)
- Neither are we justified before God by any religious rite or ritual, even if it is a rite or ritual that was commanded by God (e.g, baptism, the Lord's Supper).

III. Abraham Was not Justified by the Law (4:13-15)

- No one can be saved by the works of the Law because no one can keep the Law!
- If we are trying to save ourselves through the works of the Law, the only expectation we can have, Paul says, is the wrath of God.
- Abraham was not subject to the Law because the Law did not exist in his day; therefore, he could not earn his salvation through the works of the Law.
- We, too, are justified and declared righteous by God because of our faith in Jesus Christ apart from any religious rites, rituals or good works.

Salvation is by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. This is important because *billions* of people on planet earth are being taught something different!

- Many people believe that “all paths lead to God.” The truth is, all paths lead to hell—except one! (Cp. John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
- Salvation is not a *reward*, it is a *gift*!
- When we reject God’s offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as a free gift, the best we can come up with is some complicated, confusing formula of good works that will somehow pay for our sins and help us, hopefully, to earn or deserve salvation.

IV. Abraham Was Justified by Grace Through Faith Alone (4:16-25)

- Verses 16-17 – Abraham is the father of all who place their faith in the promises of God, whether Jew or Gentile.
- Verse 21 – Faith is being fully persuaded that God is able to do what He has promised, regardless of the circumstances.
- Verses 23-24 – These “words... were written... also for us who believe...”
- We are saved through faith in Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross and victorious resurrection from the dead. (Cp. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Louisa M.R. Stead

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, And to take Him at His word;
Just to rest upon His promise, And to know, “Thus saith the Lord.”

O how sweet to trust in Jesus, Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me ‘Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Yes, ‘tis sweet to trust in Jesus, Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee, Precious Jesus, Saviour, friend;
And I know that Thou art with me, Wilt be with me to the end.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more!

Who or what are you trusting in for your eternal salvation?