

Romans 4:1-12

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

A. Abraham our father

1. Abraham is the father of the Jews because the Jews proceeded from Abraham.
2. Believing gentiles have Abraham as the father [pattern, first in line which others proceed after] of their faith. He was the first believing gentile to be saved by faith. By the covenant given to Abraham and through His Seed we are saved also by faith in like manner.

B. has found- Gr. *heurisko- perf. tense*

1. righteousness with God is always found and not achieved. It is found in Christ. [Phil. 3:9]
2. This found righteousness is forever as seen in the perfect tense of the word found. In Christ we have found a permanent righteousness!

C. according to the flesh

1. This phrase belongs to and is describing Abraham. This verse should read, "What then shall we say that Abraham our father according to the flesh has found?"
2. Paul had just in context been discussing the Jews and Paul himself includes himself in this group. Paul is still endeavoring to prove to those under the law that righteousness comes by faith instead of works. To prove this he uses their natural father Abraham who received salvation by faith and not by works.
3. Abraham believed upon the Lord and received righteousness by faith long before the law was ever introduced. [Gen. 15:6]

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

A. For if Abraham was justified by works

1. *if-* Gr. *ei-* *third class condition- if that was true, if that was the case.*
2. Justification by works is done by living in perfection from birth to death. This not only includes outward actions but inward motive and thought. No one has done this except Jesus.

B. he has something to boast about

1. *boast-* Gr. *kauchema*
2. being justified by works in God's sight is impossible, but it is possible in other people's sight.
3. Job and Saul of Tarsus were blameless in their outward deeds.

This means no people around them could find fault with their outward actions. However, in God's light Job loathed himself and Paul called himself the chief of sinners. Inwardly both were filled with pride and self righteousness which in God's eyes are filthy rags.

C. but not before God

1. God looks beyond the surface actions to the heart, motive, and source of our works.
2. All the works of unbelievers are contaminated by a darkened dead heart. The deeds are done for selfish purposes which only the Spirit of God can truly see. Job and Saul of Tarsus were spiritually dead. They needed salvation and righteousness given to them by grace through faith.
3. We know full well that Abraham was not justified in any means by works because he was both a sinner in heart and in action. Just see how he tried to give his wife away as his sister to save his own neck two times and that shows he was not justified by works!

3. For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

A. For what does the Scripture say? [Gen. 15:6]

1. The Scripture is the written Word of God, but also the Living Word of God- Jesus
 - a. [Gal. 3:8] states that the Scripture preached to Abraham. The living Word of God- Jesus Christ, is the one who preached the gospel of a coming ONE and also witnessed of Abraham faith in his own coming some day and credited him with the righteousness that He would offer.

B. Abraham believed God

1. **believed-** Gr. **pisteuo-** *aor. tense-* This instance of faith [aor. tense] was in His promised seed. Abraham believed what God told him that ONE coming from his own body would be his heir. This was first realized in Isaac, but ultimately realized in Jesus Christ- THE SEED of Abraham.
2. This verse speaks of Abraham's faith in the COMING ONE Jesus Christ. He was saved the same way we are by faith in Jesus Christ.
3. This verse does not say that Abraham was made righteous by general faith that there was a God or general faith in God because two verses later Abraham disbelieved God when He was promised the land of Canaan as His inheritance! God had to cut covenant with him to prove it to him! He said to God, How will I know I will inherit it. He could know it because God just told him he would! However, God proved it in cutting covenant with him.

C. and it was accounted to him for righteousness

1. **accounted-** Gr. **logizomai-** *aor. pass.- to reckon, count, account*

2. **to him for righteousness**

a. It could only be accounted to him because Jesus had not yet come, died, and rose again. Righteousness was merely put to his account.

b. Today when a believer believes upon Christ and His finished work not only is righteousness accounted to them, but also imparted into them by the new birth. The seed of God causes their spirit to be born again. [1 John 3:9, 1 Peter 1:23] This new creation is made righteous- [Eph. 4:24, 2 Cor. 5:21]

4. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

A. Now to him who works

1. **works-** Gr. **ergazomai-** *pres. middle-* to the person working for righteousness and salvation they must continually work and do it all themselves as seen in the present middle tense/voice of this Greek word.

2. this refers to works of law and not to works of faith or love springing from and empowered by the Spirit to which the Christian is continually called to.

B. the wages are not counted as grace but as debt

1. **the wages-** Gr. **misthos-** *dues paid for work*

a. The only wages man gets from his works is death! The wages of sin is death. [Romans 6:23]

b. All of unsaved man's works are seen as sin to God. The unsaved man never leaves the sphere of sin. [Eph. 2:1- dead in the sphere trespasses and sins]

2. **counted-** Gr. **logizomai-** *pres. - to account*

a. the same word as Abraham was accounted righteous

b. There are two ways to be accounted righteous- by works or by faith. The first way never adds up. There is never enough of man's assets to equal righteousness. However if we change accounting systems and account by faith there is an abundant supply that fills up the full amount needed to be righteous! Christ's assets equals righteousness!

3. **as grace but as debt**

a. **grace-** Gr. **charis-** *unmerited favor*

b. **debt-** Gr. **opheilema-** *that which is justly or legally due, a debt*

c. When man works for God, instead of God owing man, man ends up being indebted to God through sin.

d. God has never and will never be indebted to man. Man is indebted to God and only through receiving the finished work of Christ can this debt be paid. The man Jesus paid our debt!

5. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

A. But to him who does not work

1. Working for salvation is a fruitless work. It is a dead work. Only those who rest in the finished work of Christ can be saved. Only then can they work with fruit. Kingdom work proceeds from rest.

B. but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly

1. **justifies**- Gr. **dikaioo**- *to make right or as one ought to be*

2. **ungodly**- Gr. **asebes**- *one who is irreverent*

a. All unsaved people are irreverent of God no matter what religious acts they perform. Reverence from God proceeds from the heart.

b. It takes the new birth to become truly reverent of God.

c. Not revering God is ungodliness. Revering God is godliness.

d. Grace does not lead us to irreverence of God, but to revere God. We are not saved by revering God, but we are saved to reverence God.

C. his faith is accounted for righteousness

1. **accounted**- Gr. **logizomai**- *present tense- being reckoned, counted, imputed*

2. **righteousness**- Gr. **dikaiosune**- *the state of being as one ought to be, right*

6. just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

A. just as David also describes the blessedness of the man

1. **Just as David**- Abraham is mentioned first in this chapter. He was justified by faith. He lived prior to the Law.

a. David lived under the law. He testifies that those who are under the law can only be justified by coming out from under the Law and be justified by faith instead of works.

b. David understood what the Law was given for; to show him his sin and reveal salvation by faith in the Lord, the Messiah. David understood and believed on the coming Messiah as seen in His prophetic writings about Him. [Ps. 22-24]

2. **describes**- Gr. **lego**- *speaks*- [Ps. 32:1-2]

3. **the blessedness**- Gr. **makarismos**- *to utter a declaration of blessedness upon one*

- a. Blessings can only be received from God by grace instead of merit.
- b. God's blessings are given by unmerited favor on our part [Eph 1:3], but are revealed by the fruit of the Spirit which are brought forth through faith. [Gal. 5:22-23] Ex. The faithful man will abound with blessings. [Prov. 28:20] All nine fruit of the Spirit contain the blessings of God. God does not bless us independent of grace or of the Spirit of God working in us by our faith. Fruit does not come by works, but by abiding. Abiding in the vine brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. [John 15:5]
- c. David sinned heinously with Bathsheba by killing Uriah the Hittite. David did not find forgiveness by penitence or even in animal sacrifice, but in faith in the grace and mercy of God.

4. **man-** Gr. **anthropos-** *mankind [male and female] in general as opposed to Gr. aner an adult male or male having authority. ie. husband*

B. to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works

1. Man wants to be blessed by God by a combination of God's grace and their works. They want to have some control over their blessings by their performance. This comes from pride and fear. Pride in that they want to feel good about themselves by their works and accomplishments and fear in that they think if they don't participate by their works they will not be blessed. They don't trust God to bless them outside of their works.

7. "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED;

A. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven

1. **Blessed-** Gr. **makarios-** Many think righteousness and being blessed by God are disconnected or given by different principles. They will agree that they can only be righteous by faith in God's grace, but at the same time believe to be blessed they must deserve it by their performance. Being blessed is rooted and founded upon being made righteous. We are blessed because we are righteous and we are only made righteous by faith and not by works, therefore we also are blessed by faith and not works!

2. **lawless deeds-** Gr. **anomia-** *without law*

- a. The Jews were lawless in that they violated God's law
- b. The Gentiles were lawless in that they lived without law
- c. Christians live by the higher laws of faith and love. We are **NOT** lawless. Christians fulfill the Mosaic Law by faith in Christ who was the substance of the Law.

3. **forgiven-** Gr. **aphiemi-** *aor. pass.- to send off*

a. God has caused our lawless deeds to be sent off. He has bid them bon voyage!

b. David had been guilty of breaking the law. He broke most of the ten commandments over the Bathsheba affair! However, when David sought God's grace through faith, his lawless deeds were sent away from him to the cross!

4. **sins-** Gr. **harmartia-** *missing of the mark*

5. **are covered-** Gr. **epikalupto-** *aor. pass. - epi- over; kalupto- to cover, close, or conceal*

a. Take note that this is a quote of David before the cross.

Before the cross sins were merely covered and not removed.

The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin.

b. It took the shed blood of Jesus Christ to remove sin. New covenant Christians do not have their sins covered. They have them cleansed, purged, and removed! [2 Peter 1:9, Heb. 1:3, Heb. 9:26]

8. **BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD SHALL NOT IMPUTE SIN."**

A. **Blessed-** Gr. **makarios**

B. **man-** Gr. **aner-** *male- anthropos is not used here because David is referring to himself, a male.*

C. **Lord-** Gr. **kurios-** *he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord*

D. **shall not impute-** Gr. **ou me logizomai-** *translate the double negative in Greek as in no way, certainly not, absolutely not impute [put to one's account]*

1. Because of Christ's death on the cross God is not imputing men's sins to them today. [2 Cor. 5:18-19] Why? Because they were all imputed already upon Christ. God will not be held liable for double jeopardy! If Jesus suffered full punishment for our sins, then God would be unjust to punish us again for them. God will in no means, absolutely not impute sins to us who have accepted Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

2. People do not go to hell today because of their sins. They go to hell for only one sin- the rejection of the finished work of Christ. So sad that many will spend eternity separated from God with their sins have been paid for by the sacrifice of Christ. Their rejection of Christ will haunt them throughout the endless eternity. For those who have accepted Christ we will praise God throughout the endless eternity!

E. **sin-** Gr. **hamartia**

9. **Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon**

the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.

A. **Blessedness-** Gr. **makarismos-** *to pronounce one blessed*

B. **upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also?**

1. The same exact gospel with the same exact promises are given to both Jews and Gentiles. They do not have two different gospels or ways to get saved. Jesus is THE way, THE truth, and THE life and NO MAN comes to the Father except by Him [Jesus] [John 14:6]

C. **For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness**

1. This was hundreds of years before the Law.
2. Both Jews and Gentiles have Abraham as their father. Jews by natural birth and Gentiles by spiritual birth. Both Jews and Gentiles are made righteous exactly as Abraham was which was by faith.

10. **How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.**

A. Abraham was saved as a Gentile, when he was uncircumcised.

B. The rite of circumcision came years later in Abraham's life after he was saved by grace through faith.

C. The covenant of circumcision that God gave Abraham prefigured the Law. When he gave this covenant he commanded Abraham to be perfect. [Gen. 17:1] This was the first mention of Abraham's performance in connection to God's dealing with him. First came the covenant of grace [given to Abraham and His seed] and then the covenant of law.

D. The Abrahamic covenant was incomplete. Although it revealed God's grace, it did not reveal God's holy justice and wrath upon sin and it did not reveal God's answer for sin which was the sacrifice of Christ. The Law was given to complete this revelations to man. The law revealed God's holiness in the 613 commandments and the penalty for sin and the answer for sin were revealed in the sacrifices. Once people saw their true nature of sin and God's wrath towards it and God's answer for sin which was Calvary, then men could fully accept grace unto salvation by faith in Christ.

11. **And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,**

A. **And he received the sign of circumcision**

1. **received-** Gr. **lambano**

2. **sign-** Gr. **seimion**

- a. notice that circumcision is called a sign. A sign is not the substance of a thing but points to it. Physical circumcision was a

mere sign of something else, which is spiritual circumcision, or in other words the new birth, in which the flesh is cut away from the spirit and the spirit is regenerated. [Rom. 2:29]

- b. Under the law a person was circumcised physically and told to keep all of the commandments to be righteous. Under grace we are circumcised spiritually and fulfill the law by faith in Christ and receive His righteous life as a gift.
- c. Abraham received grace first [Gen. 15:6] and then came under obligation to performance towards God later. [Gen. 17:1] This is the pattern of most Christians. They get saved by grace, but soon afterward revert to a performance relationship towards God. This needs not be if they are taught correctly.

B. a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised

1. a seal- Gr. sphragis

- a. not only is physical circumcision a sign of spiritual circumcision- the new birth, it is also was a seal. This natural seal was a type of the spiritual seal upon a believer's born again spirit, which is the Holy Spirit's seal. The Holy Spirit is the true seal of righteousness placed upon a believer's regenerated spirit. [2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13, Eph. 4:30]
- b. Once someone believes upon Christ they are then sealed by the Spirit of God. This is the seal of righteousness in their life. We can know we are righteous by the seal of righteousness in our heart. This seal is the Holy Spirit Himself! If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of His. [Romans 8:9] Thus every true Christian is righteous having God's seal of righteousness in Him which is the Holy Spirit.

C. that he might be the father of all of them that believe

1. **father-** Gr. **pater-** *a more remote ancestor, the founder of a family or tribe, progenitor of a people, forefather, the originator and transmitter of anything*

2. **that believe-** Gr. **pisteuoo-** *pres. tense*

- a. Abraham is the father to all of those who believe because the promise to bless the nations of the world through His seed was given to Abraham.
- b. He is only the father to those who believe. He is the natural father of the physical race of Jews, but that will end in death. However, Abraham will be a spiritual father to those who believe forever. Of course, God is our only true Father, but Abraham and the covenant given to him was the origination of our blessing.

D. though they be uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also

1. if Abraham was made righteous as a Jew and because he was a Jew and keeper of the law, then the Gentiles would have no grounds to be made righteous. However, Abraham was saved as a uncircumcised heathen. He was saved by faith. Through Abraham and His seed God promised to bless the nations with the gift of righteousness to all who believed after the manner of Abraham. He believed upon the promised Seed- Jesus. We believe upon the Seed- Jesus- was has already come and died for us.

12. and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

A. and the father of circumcision

1. Natural Jews

B. who not only are of the circumcision, but who walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised

1. **walk-** Gr. **stoicheo-** *to proceed in a row as the march of a soldier, go in order*
 - a. Those who refuse to believe upon Christ and His finished work for them walk disorderly and are in insubordination to the supreme commander of the universe. They shall be court marshaled.
 - b. [**James 4:7**]- *Submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.* Submission to God does not come by works, but by faith in the finished work of Christ and receiving the free gift of righteousness by faith. This is submission to God and will empower us to walk in line with His will and plan for us.
 - c. Legalistic Christians are out of line with God!
2. **steps-** Gr. **ichnos-** *a footprint, track, foot step in the NT, metaphorically of imitating the example of any one*
 - a. notice the plural steps and not step. The initial step of faith is accepting the Lord Jesus as Savior. This is a gift by faith. The faith that saves however works! A true faith in Christ will lead a person to start following Him. True faith brings a new birth and the very desire of that new nature is to follow the Savior and Shepherd- Jesus!

C. which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised

1. Again revealing that all Gentiles can be made righteous as well in the same way which is by faith in the Seed- Jesus!