

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Romans 4:1-8
MAY 14, 2017

As we dive into Romans 4:1-8, Paul continues to expound on the gospel. More specifically, he defends the doctrine of justification by faith alone; that we are made right with God by faith in Jesus, not our works. Paul spends much of his apostolic ministry defending justification by faith, because it is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. If we miss justification, we're missing the gospel. Paul spends his time explaining that the fathers of our faith, Abraham and David, were living examples of sinners being justified by faith, and the hard truth of understanding that we are counted as righteous through Christ, and yet, we are ungodly people.

1. In verses 1-4, Paul begs the question, "What then shall we say was gained by Abraham our forefather according to the flesh?". This shows us that Abraham could gain nothing by his works; the only way he was counted righteous, was by believing God.

—Abraham is sometimes regarded as a man of great faith and character, but what do we actually know about Abraham's life? What sins did he fall into? Would he be the first person you would point to as an example of faith?

—Because Abraham was counted as righteous through faith, not works, he has nothing to boast about. We often boast in ourselves and works without realizing it. What are some ways you put trust in yourself instead of God?

—One of the implications in this text is that justification by faith has always been the way people are saved. People often separate the Old and New Testament, even to the point of speaking of "the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament". What are some ways that people depict the "two Gods of the Old and New Testament"? What does this text say about the character of God?

2. It can be tempting to read verses 4 and 5 and think that Paul is speaking against doing good works, because we are not justified by our works. True faith trusts God for justification and trusts him with our entire lives.

—What does it mean to have true biblical faith in God? What's the difference between agreeing that something is true, and putting your trust in God?

—People generally fall into legalism or antinomianism—which one do you usually fall into? How do we combat this with the gospel?

3. In verse 5-8, Paul speaks of the ungodly being justified, and points to King David, who understood this well. David fell into great sin, but even before committing adultery, David knew that truly being blessed means to be forgiven by God, even though he still struggled with sin.

—Do you often find yourself resting in God's forgiveness?

—How does being forgiven affect the way we fight the sin we currently struggle with?

—How does being forgiven affect the way we interact with non-believers, family, friends, etc?