

The Book of Romans.05. Justification.04

Today, we continue the study of the Doctrine of Justification in the Book of Romans

The Doctrine of Justification is set forth in Romans 1:18-5:21, with Romans 1:18-3:20 concluding that no one will be justified on the basis of their works and Romans 3:21-5:21 setting forth the way of justification which is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ

- Basic outline of **Romans 3:21-5:21** is:

- (a) **Romans 3:21-31** - Justification by Grace through Faith in Christ
- (b) **Romans 4:1-25** - Abraham Justified by Grace through Faith
- (c) **Romans 5:1-11** - The Blessings of Justification
- (d) **Romans 5:12-21** - Adam and Christ

Having stated in Romans 3:21-31 the principle of justification by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, Romans 4:1-25 proves this from Scripture from the life of Abraham

The importance of Abraham cannot be overemphasized because, as God changed his name from “Abram,” meaning “exalted father,” to “Abraham,” meaning “father of multitude or nations,” he is the founding “father of faith” (Romans 4:16-17)

➔ For this reason, God’s justification of Abraham is foundational to the doctrine of justification

A basic outline of these Romans 4:1-25 is

- (a) **Romans 4:1-3** - Scripture states Abraham was Justified through Faith
- (b) **Romans 4:4-8** - David states Justification is Apart from Works
- (c) **Romans 4:9-12** - Abraham’s Justification demonstrates Circumcision is not required
- (d) **Romans 4:13-17** - Abraham’s Justification demonstrates it is not on the basis of Law
- (e) **Romans 4:18-22** - The Faith of Abraham
- (f) **Romans 4:23-25** - The Justification of Abraham Applied to Believers in Jesus

(a) Romans 4:1-3 - Scripture States Abraham Was Justified through Faith

The foremost importance of Abraham is presumed by the fact that he is simply presented with no introduction or explanation of who he is

- **Romans 4:1** - *What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?*

- The one definition of Abraham is that he is “*our forefather according to the flesh*”

- This shows these words are primarily written to Jewish people who know the Scriptures and would object to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

- For this reason, how the Scriptures record the way God related to him and how he was justified is critical because Scripture, and not tradition, is the supreme authority

Referring back to 3:27 to “boasting,” which is being proud of one’s achievements, Paul acknowledges that if, indeed, Abraham had been justified by his works, he would have reason to “boast,” but, to the contrary, “the Scriptures say” he was justified through faith alone

- **Romans 4:2-3** - *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”*

- The Scripture quoted is **Genesis 15:6**, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”

- The context is God’s covenant word of promise to him that God would give him descendants as numerous as the “stars” in the heavens (Gen. 15:5)

The key words in this verse are “believed God,” “counted,” and “righteousness”

(a) The words “believed God” mean

(1) Abraham had faith in the word of God, trusting in God’s promise that He would do what He said He would do (Romans 4:21)

(2) It was this faith of Abraham in God’s promise, and not his works, nor his faith plus his works, but his faith alone that was the critical issue which caused God to act

(b) The word “counted,” which is frequently translated “imputed,” is the Greek verb “λογίζομαι” and identifies the judgment of God in which, like a charge account, God positively “credited” something to Abraham

(1) The voice is *passive*, meaning this is something God did to Abraham, not something that Abraham caused to happen or produced

(2) The tense is *aurist*, meaning it is a completed action, not something that is potential, contingent, or could be lost

(c) “righteousness,” which is the critical concern, was Abraham’s legal standing before God, which is the same as being “justified”

(b) Romans 4:4-8 - David States Justification is Apart from Works

Along with Abraham, David is one of the two individuals with whom God made covenant promises

- Because of this, David’s testimony concerning how God relates to an individual is also critical
- David’s testimony proves the doctrine of justification through faith and not according to works

First, the basic principles of the two ways of being “justified” are restated, the one being according to “works” and the other through “faith”

- **Romans 4:4-5** = *Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*

- The basic “economics” of the principle of justification by “works” is expressed in the justice of “wages,” or a “reward,” being a payment for what is “due,” which is a “legal debt that one is obligated to pay”

- This is a summary statement of Romans 2:6-11 concerning justification according to “works”

- The fact that justification through “faith” is not by works is emphasized by the designation that those who are justified through “faith” are “the ungodly,” which is the translation of the Greek word ἀσεβής, the root meaning “no fear of God” and referring back to Romans 3:18

This Biblical doctrine of “justification through “faith” and not “works” is proved by David’s own testimony in Psalm 32:1-2

- **Romans 4:4-5** = just as **David** also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”
- The legal standing of this person is “blessed,” which is more than simply being “happy”
- “Blessed” is the state of enjoying God’s love, peace, and the fulfillment in His manifest presence because of a right relationship with God, in other words, having been justified
- This “blessed” person is one who has committed “lawless deeds” and “sin” against God, the opposite of a person who always and only does works of righteousness
- The basis of this person’s justification is that their “sins” individually and “sin” in totality have been “covered,” meaning atoned for, and legally “forgiven,” which literally means “released from the debt” to God (The word Jesus uses in the Lord’s Prayer in Matt. 6:12)
- The corresponding consequence is that God does not “count his sin” against him but instead has justified the person
- The legal reason for this is that, because of the righteous and just nature of God, it would be unrighteous, thus impossible, for Him to execute His wrath against one whose sins are “forgiven”

(c) Romans 4:9-12 - Abraham’s Justification demonstrates Circumcision is not required

The first issue concerning the doctrine of justification through faith alone is the covenant sign of circumcision which was previously looked at in Romans 2:25-29

- Many Jewish believers (as well as unbelievers) “were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1)
- As the Book of Galatians shows, this was/is not an “incidental” or “non-essential” matter, but is, in fact, the difference between salvation and being “cursed” by God (Gal. 1:8-9)
- The essential issue is whether justification is through faith *alone*, or that along with faith, *something else required*, in this case circumcision (which would be the same as water baptism)
- Because the sign of circumcision was given to Abraham, what is determinative is how and when he was justified in relationship to him being given the sign of circumcision
- **Romans 4:9-10** = *Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.* ¹⁰ **How then** was it counted to him? Was it **before or after** he had been circumcised? It was **not after, but before he was circumcised.**
- This demonstrates that circumcision is not required for justification

The question, then, is what was the meaning and purpose circumcision?

- Circumcision is an outward “sign” and “seal” or promise to him being justified through faith
- The purpose, then, is that it is an outward “sign” that the person who has faith like Abraham will be justified, whether one is a Jew who is “circumcised” or a Gentile who is “uncircumcised”
- **Romans 4:11-12** = *He received **the sign of circumcision** as a **seal of the righteousness** that he had **by faith** while he was still uncircumcised. **The purpose** was to make him the father of **all who believe** without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also **walk in the footsteps of the faith** that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*

(d) Romans 4:13-17 - Abraham's Justification demonstrates it is not on the basis of Law

The second issue concerning the doctrine of justification through faith alone is the law which was previously looked at in Romans 2:12-24

- The basic issue of works according to the law is that, because people sin, “*the law brings wrath*” (Rom. 2:8), with the consequence that the promise of God to His people that they would “*be heir of the world,*” meaning given eternal life, is nullified

- For this reason, justification must be by “*grace*” through “*faith*” so that eternal life can be “*guaranteed to all his offspring*” who have faith in “*the promise*” of God like Abraham

- **Romans 4:13-17** = For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring - not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations” - in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

(e) Romans 4:18-22 - The Faith of Abraham

Because those who will be “heirs of the world” and given eternal life must have faith like Abraham, what kind of faith did he have?

- **Romans 4:18-22** = In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²² That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

(f) Romans 4:23-25 - The Justification of Abraham Applied to Believers in Jesus

The essential principle of God justifying Abraham by grace through faith alone is now applied to all those who “believe” in real time-space history of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

- **Romans 4:23-25** = But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

- The gracious work of God to justify people and save them from the penalty of sin is freely given to all who truly “believe” in and “confess” that Jesus died for their “trespasses” and was “raised from the dead” to become “Lord” over all creation and “Lord” of their lives

- **Romans 10:9-10** = if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.