

[Romans Chapter Four]

~ Our Spiritual Safari continues to examine the doctrine of justification by faith in this report. Our previous report could be considered part one, and this is a continuation of it. We're considering the justification by God of a lost sinner. I think our last several reports have been succinct and clear; and our most recent report was justification by faith '*explained.*' This report will be justification by faith '*illustrated.*' The illustrations we are given here are two-fold. If you haven't read our previous report I suggest you go back and do so now. We saw Abraham lived before the law, so we cannot attach the Mosaic Law to Abraham in any way, shape or form; and we asked the question: could David have been saved by the law?

In Paul's day, when he wrote this epistle to the Romans, Abraham and David were held in higher esteem by the nation Israel than any other two people in the Old Testament. I recognize that is not true today. Many debates only ask was Moses better than Abraham? They leave David out altogether. Interestingly, we never seem to render a final decision in the question. Well, in the day in which we live, I feel Abraham is more popular in a debate; particularly the Orthodox Jew. The Orthodox Jew goes back to Abraham. Abraham still boasts in the fact that he is their father! Remember, Jesus asked the apostles, "*what think ye of Christ?*" They immediately answered, "*He is the Son of David.*"

Well, here Paul uses Abraham and David as illustrations to establish his statement in the previous chapter, which concludes there is concord agreement between the law and the Gospel; even though they present two diametrically opposed value systems. Neither contradicts or conflicts with the other in any way; and they are not mutually exclusive, either! Under the law, and before the law, faith was God's soul requirement for salvation; and Abraham was justified by faith. David has Psalms about justification by faith. So, what we have coming up is not some strange new doctrine that cancels out the Old Testament and leaves the Jew floating somewhere on a sea of spiritual life hanging onto an anchor rather than being in the lifeboat. Paul is showing us that Abraham and David are both in the same lifeboat!

That lifeboat has room for you, and it has written on the side of it:
Justification by Faith....

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

~ So, the question is: what have we discovered concerning our natural human effort? We arrive in an argumentative portion of Scripture in this passage. Our thesis will be based on the fact that man is a sinner. We already know the nation Israel began chronologically with Abraham; who was not under the law. Noah and Adam aren't even considered in the lineage. Well, Abraham found out that Abraham's works, according to the flesh, did not produce anything worthy of bragging about. What it produced was shame and confusion. Now, don't misunderstand me, Abraham was a great and honorable man – particularly in the matter of Lot. Another outstanding account is that Abraham wouldn't allow the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah to reward him. However, we have the little matter of that Egyptian maid, Hagar – which is a big problem; whom Abraham picked up when he was out of the will of God down there in Egypt....

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

~ Abraham would have been able to glory in pride before men, but not before God; and it is widely assumed that Abraham had very good works. Frankly, Abraham had *MANY* good works. Abraham was startled to discover his good works were not the grounds for salvation, though. Those good works were the result of salvation, and they were the result of being justified by faith. James says, “.... *faith without works is dead.*” However, James is not talking about works of the flesh under law. James was not under the law when he wrote his epistle; he was under grace. Abraham offered up Isaac in faith, but God stopped him and wouldn't let him complete the sacrifice – why? – because it was wrong, my friend....

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

~ The only righteousness of Abraham found in the Bible is believing God! Abraham stood on the same ground as the weakest sinner stands today. God never accepts works of the flesh because the works of the flesh will not stand before His Holiness. James and Paul both quote verse three; Paul will quote it again three times in this epistle and also in the epistles of Galatians and Hebrews. Paul always appeals to the Scriptures as the final authority. Paul even personifies verse three as God speaking. What does the Scripture say? There is no other authority that we can appeal to, friends. Whatever the Bible says, God said! I'll be honest with you readers, because I always am honest with you; I wish more so-called evangelicals actually believed that the Word of God is the Word of God and that they weren't so totally and completely ignorant of it. That would make my job much easier. God is speaking through Paul. Man is not speaking here. Paul quotes the Old Testament *at least* sixty times in this epistle alone; and here we have Genesis chapter fifteen verse six; Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

God gave *NO* confirmation of His promise to Abraham that Abraham's seed would be like the stars. God made the promise and Abraham was to take it or leave it — period. Abraham took the naked Word of God at face value and rested in it. Dr. Newell said, *".... there was no honor and no merit in Abraham who believed a faithful God that cannot lie! The honor is all God's! Abraham simply did the one thing that man can do without doing anything and that is to believe! Abraham's faith was not an act but an attitude. Abraham turned his heart completely away from himself and towards God and to His promise! That left God free to fulfill that promise in him! There was no change of character in Abraham; he simply believed that God would deliver what He had promised! In these shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* ~

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

~ It is a general axiom of society that a man works and is paid for the services he renders the employer. They either work for so much an hour or they are paid for a particular job. Abraham was, obviously, not a workman. He did not earn what he received. Abraham only received on the basis of undeserved mercy by the grace of God; and because he believed God! No other reason, friends. Verse five makes it very clear that there is nothing at all we can do that will merit our salvation. God is only saving unrighteous people. If you think God saves good people, then name one good person. There are *NONE* righteous – according to God. God *would* save a good person, but Scripture says there are none. And if you attempt to declare someone is good, you are calling God a liar. Are you sure you want to do that? It will be a little difficult to prove your point if you do.

We either believe God or we don't believe God, friends; and even our belief must be strictly according to God's standard! Faith is that standard; and faith is the condition. Faith is reckoned for salvation; faith is God's instrument that He works through in our salvation. God only accepts faith in lieu of works. Faith honors God and secures our righteousness. God simply deposited righteousness into Abraham's account; the account God had given him in the first place. Actually, Abraham's faith was counted to him for what it was not – because he was not righteousness. That could only ever come from God; and this is *very, very, very* important to see, understand, process, remember and profess friends....

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

~ David lived subject to the Mosaic Law, but he could never have been saved by practicing the Mosaic Law after what happened with Uriah and Bathsheba! David tells of the blessedness of God with no works because David didn't have any good works! The only works David really had were evil. Again, the only logical conclusion is that righteousness must have been apart from works. Tragically for those who subscribe to heresy concerning this matter, righteousness comes on an entirely different principle, according to Scripture....

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

~ Verse seven is a direct quote from Psalm thirty-two verses one and two. That is one of the great penitential Psalms David wrote. These verses are the outcome of David's great sin and his confession of it — and acceptance of the ramifications that necessarily followed. "*Blessed*" is the highest expression the human language has for communicating the extent of happiness and joy. This is the greatest beatitude of all, by far. David knew about his iniquities being forgiven *from experience*. See David didn't break the law in ignorance; and yet, he was forgiven. That means definite, permanent and complete remission of his sins. This is the tenderness of how God takes a sinner into His arms of love and receives him with affection....

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

~ Remember, Nathan the prophet told David, "*.... the Lord put away thy sin; thou shalt not die*" — second Samuel twelve verse thirteen. Nevertheless, David was chastened severely by Nathan in the parable about the rich man that took the poor man's only little ewe lamb. When David heard that, he said, "*.... the man shall restore the lamb four-fold!*" That's second Samuel chapter twelve verse six. Well, that was impossible to do.

Four of David's children were killed during his life and reign that we know of. The first son with Bathsheba died at birth. Ammon, his firstborn son died. Absalom and Adonijah both died. Sorrow plagued David all the days of his life, but his guilt was not put on his account. That's how David was able to say "*.... joyful is the man whose sin the Lord will in no wise put upon him.*" What about you, my beloved safari readers; do you really have joy today because your sins are forgiven? ~

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

~ Abraham had nothing he could trust; nothing he could touch or feel, and nothing he could see comforted him. All Abraham could do was believe God – plus nothing! Abraham was not double-minded. He looked away from his circumstances to the promises God had made to him. Abraham believed God even when the tangible circumstances of his life seemed to nullify the possibility of any of it. Abraham put his confidence in a promise because the True and Living God had given it to him in revelation. This is giving worship to God, friends. See, man was created to glorify God. In his disobedience, man did the opposite. Now, the only way we can possibly glorify God is to believe Him! Abraham believed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ....

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

~ Sarah's womb was a tomb! It was a place of death; out of which came life. Abraham believed God and that's what it means when Jesus said, "Abraham saw My day and rejoiced!" That's John chapter eight verse fifty-six. Our faith is in more than His death – it is in His resurrection. Mathew Henry said, "... in Christ's death He paid our debt and in His resurrection He took up our quittance." God justifies those who believe in the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! How wonderful this really is....

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification ~