

ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH

V. God's Righteousness Applied By Justification, Romans 3:21-5:21

B. God's Justification Of Old Testament Sinners By Faith

(Romans 4:1-25)

I. Introduction

- A. The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that God's righteousness is available to man by faith from start to finish (Romans 1:16-17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441).
- B. This belief is often not accepted in Christendom: Some claim that one must have faith plus works to be justified, and others say that though we are justified by faith, we cannot righteously live a godly life by faith.
- C. Having explained in Romans 3:21-31 how God justifies anyone who trusts in Christ as his Savior from sin, Paul faced the question of his Hebrew countrymen as to how their forefather Abraham who lived long before Christ could then be justified. Paul answered this question in Romans 4:1-25, and we view it for our insight:

II. God's Justification Of Old Testament Sinners By Faith, Romans 4:1-25.

- A. To answer the question by his Hebrew countrymen about how their forefather Abraham who lived before Christ could be justified, Paul claimed that Abraham was also justified by faith without works, Romans 4:1-8:
 - 1. Though the Hebrew rabbis taught "that Abraham had a surplus of merit from his works that was available to his descendants" (Ibid., p. 453), Paul wrote that had Abraham been justified by his works, he might be able to boast about it before other people, but not before a perfectly righteous, holy God, Romans 4:1-2.
 - 2. All have sinned (Romans 3:23), so all must be justified by grace, the proof of it in Abraham's case being Genesis 15:6 where Abraham believed God, and He credited it to him for righteousness, Romans 4:3.
 - 3. Had Abraham earned his justified status by works, his justification would not be a gift, but since God justified him for believing God's Word, Abraham's justification was a gift from God by faith, Rom. 4:4-5.
 - 4. By implication, the Rabbis' claim that Abraham had a surplus of merit in his works available for his descendants for their justification errs, for Abraham as a sinner had to be justified by faith without works!
 - 5. The same was true of believers like David who lived under the Mosaic Law: David wrote that blessed was he who had been forgiven by God instead of having his sins credited (*logisetai*) to his account against him, meaning that God had graciously credited (*logisetai*) His righteousness to that man, Romans 4:6-8; Ibid.
- B. Paul then explained that Old Testament Abraham was justified apart from circumcision, Romans 4:9-12:
 - 1. The Apostle Paul observed that God's justifying of Abraham in Genesis 15:6 occurred **before** he was **circumcised** in Genesis 17:1-27 at the age of 99 years, Romans 4:9-10.
 - 2. Physical circumcision for Abraham was merely an outward sign of the faith that he had expressed and for which God had justified him when he was still uncircumcised, and that so that Abraham might be the spiritual forefather of all who are justified by faith apart from circumcision, Romans 4:11.
 - 3. Abraham is also the spiritual father of Hebrews who are circumcised providing they walk in the steps of their forefather and believe in Christ today, Romans 4:12.
- C. Paul added that Abraham's justification was apart from observing the Mosaic Law, Romans 4:13-15:
 - 1. God had promised that Abraham would be heir of the world in Genesis 12:1-3 hundreds of years before the time of Moses through whom God gave the Mosaic Law, Romans 4:13a; Exodus 3:1-6.
 - 2. Since the Mosaic Law can only work God's wrath since it only exposes sin (Romans 4:15; 3:20), to make the way of salvation by faith the true path to justification, God gave Abraham the promise long before the institution of the Mosaic Law, making that promise effective apart from the Mosaic Law, Romans 4:13-15.
- D. Paul concluded that Abraham was justified by faith that justification might be a gift of God's grace so that God's promise to bless all men through Abraham might be by faith, making Abraham the spiritual forefather of all believers in history to follow, Romans 4:16-17a. Abraham believed God's promise that he would be the father of many nations though his elderly body was reproductively essentially dead along with the womb of his elderly wife Sarah, so God reckoned Abraham's faith to him for righteousness, Romans 4:17b-22.
- E. Abraham's justification was recorded in Scripture not only for his sake, but for ours many years later, that we might be edified in knowing that God **has always** justified men by faith without works, Romans 4:23-25.

Lesson: Justification by faith alone is not a new idea begun by the Church, for Abraham was justified this way.

Application: May we rest assured that the teaching of justification by faith alone is not some new and thus false belief begun in the Church, but that justification has always been by faith alone, that it is the true way to be saved!