

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Romans: Charter Of God's Salvation Grace
Part III: The Justification Of The Sinner By Faith Through Grace, Romans 3:21-5:21
B. Documenting The LONG PRECEDENTS Of Justification By Faith Alone
(Romans 4:1-25)

I. Introduction

- A. If we hold to Paul's Romans 3:21-31 teaching that justification is by faith alone, we are left claiming many false gospels circulate in the world that include some form of human merit or work to gain salvation.
- B. Accordingly, many religious folk would say our gospel is new or unusual and thus suspect of being errant.
- C. In reality, God has been justifying sinners by faith alone at least since Abraham's era of 2000 B. C. (Merrill F. Unger, *Arch. and the O. T.*, 1973, p. 107), a fact Paul documented from the Old Testament:

II. Documenting The LONG PRECEDENTS Of Justification By Faith Alone, Romans 4:1-25.

- A. Paul showed from the Old Testament how God justified Abraham by faith, Romans 4:1-8:
 - 1. Responding to anticipated objections from his Hebrew readers that his gospel of justification by faith would not apply to father Abraham, and thus be errant (Romans 4:1), Paul noted that had Abraham been justified by works, he might have cause to boast, but not before God as he also was a sinner, 4:2!
 - 2. Yet, citing Genesis 15:6, Paul reported: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," Rom. 4:3. So, Abraham himself was justified by God through faith back in 2000 B. C.!
 - 3. Affirming this work of God to justify the sinner by grace through faith, Paul added that centuries after Abraham, David wrote (Ps. 32:1-2) of God's forgiveness of sin by grace and not by works, Rom. 4:4-8.
- B. Paul showed from the Old Testament how God justified Abraham apart from circumcision, Rom. 4:9-12:
 - 1. Knowing his countrymen who read his epistle might answer that Abraham was justified by faith **plus circumcision** (Rom. 4:9), Paul claimed God justified Abraham **apart from circumcision**, Rom. 4:10.
 - 2. Viewing the Old Testament record proves Paul's point: God justified Abraham back in Genesis 15:6 when Abraham was wondering who would be his heir as he then had no son, but it was not until Genesis 17:10-27 well after his son Ishmael was born that Abraham was circumcised with Ishmael!
 - 3. Paul thus held that God had justified Abraham by faith apart from circumcision, instituting the ritual of circumcision as a seal of his righteousness before God, that Abraham might be the spiritual father of all who believe, be they circumcised or uncircumcised, Romans 4:11-12.
- C. Paul showed from the Old Testament how God justified Abraham apart from the Mosaic Law, 4:13-15:
 - 1. Aware that his Hebrew readers might reply that justification came through obeying the Mosaic Law, Paul noted that Abraham in Genesis 15:6 was justified apart from the Law since he was justified centuries before the Law had been given to Israel through Moses, Romans 4:13 with Exodus 3:23-3:2.
 - 2. Paul noted that were justification to have come by keeping the Law, God's promises to Abraham would be ineffectual as he did not have the Law, and Abraham would not have been justified, Rom. 4:14.
 - 3. Besides, as Paul had noted in Romans 3:20, he repeated the truth that the Law only condemns, 4:15.
- D. Paul showed from the Old Testament how God justified Abraham by faith alone as our precedent, 4:16ff:
 - 1. Abraham's justification was by faith that God's promise of blessing to Abraham might apply to all his spiritual seed who were justified by faith alone just as he was, Romans 4:16-18.
 - 2. Abraham believed God would give him a son though he and his wife were reproductively "dead" at their great ages (Romans 4:19-21), so God imputed His righteousness unto Abraham, Romans 4:22.
 - 3. The Genesis record of this justification was given for us that we might be confident that God would justify us as He did father Abraham apart from works or merit when we trust in Christ, Rom. 4:23-25.

Lesson: Paul documented from the Old Testament itself that God justified Abraham way back in 2000 B. C. by faith apart from human work or merit, and that before he was circumcised or had the Mosaic Law, that we might understand and be confident that we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone!

Application: May we REST in the TRUTHFULNESS of the Gospel of justification by faith ALONE in Christ ALONE, for this is NOT a NEW and hence SUSPECT concept, but it ALIGNS with how God dealt with the justification of our spiritual father, Abraham as far back as 2000 B. C.!