

Righteousness apart from the Law

Romans 4:10—16

In Romans 4:1—9 Paul gives Abraham as an example of receiving righteousness without the Law and David receiving righteousness apart from the Law. This section continues with the proof that a Jew is not declared righteous by following the Law. Paul was specifically addressing the Jew as evidenced in verse 1 but turns then expands his argument to cover the Gentile in verse 9.

Verses 10—12

Paul makes an important point about the timing of Abraham's circumcision. He was declared righteous **before** he was circumcised. He was circumcised before there was a Jewish nation meaning technically he was a Gentile when declared righteous. Paul pointed this out to show the Gentiles they were just as eligible to be declared righteous as the Jew and the Jews were being shown that the Gentiles were now equally eligible for God to impart righteous.

Galatians 3:6, 7, 29⁶Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.⁷Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

It is those who are coming to God in faith who are declared righteous, whether Jew or Gentile. We are all connected to Abraham by how we come to God. Those who come to God in faith have a faith like Abraham. Those who followed after Abraham in coming to God in faith, are said to be his descendants. Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers because all believers need to come to God in faith.

Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Don't get confused with those who teach that we are spiritual Israel. We are spiritual descendants of Abraham but all the blessings promised to Abraham for the nation of Israel are only for the nation of Israel. This verse does not say that we will inherit the blessings of Israel but we will receive the blessing of Abraham. Abraham was blessed with righteousness, just as we who believe by faith are blessed.

Abraham was declared righteous and then was given circumcision as a seal of God's work in him. Having the Gentiles being declared righteous by faith is in no contradiction to Scripture which states the all the Gentiles (nations) would be blessed in Abraham.

Galatians 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

Please note that this passage says "All nations will be blessed in you" not that they will be blessed in Israel or in Abraham's seed. Paul quotes this passage from Genesis 12:3 knowing that the blessing we experience is not through Israel's rise and glorification but because of Israel's fall. The Gentiles were blessed spiritually through Jesus Christ who came through Abraham's seed.

Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

Compare this with what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost :

Acts 3:25 "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.'

This passage is in line with many prophecies made in the Old Testament stating that it will be through Israel that the Gentiles will be blessed. This will happen in the Millennial Kingdom (See Isaiah 60:3; Zechariah 8:13, 23) when war will stop, disease will stop, the desert will bloom and the animal kingdom will be tamed. This promise is illustrated in the parable of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:21—29. Peter, by the Holy Spirit, chose this passage in Genesis 22:18 because the Millennial Kingdom was at hand. The Gospels and Acts 1—8 are all focused on Israel and God's prophetic program for her. Paul chose the Genesis 12:3 passage (through the Holy Spirit) because the Body of Christ will not be blessed through Israel but we are blessed through Abraham, specifically his seed—Jesus Christ.

Abraham is not only father of Israel but of the Gentiles in a spiritual sense. Those Gentiles who come to God in faith as Abraham did are Abraham's spiritual offspring. We can see this concept in Romans 12:27.

Verses 13—15

The promise to Abraham of being the heir to Israel spiritually and materially, and heir to the rest of the world spiritually was all a result of Abraham's faith. This was all done outside the Law since the Law had not yet been given. If this blessing came about by being in the Law then faith is made void because it would then be by works and the blessing would be given out of debt instead of Grace. The Law, instead, brings wrath because no one is able to comply with the Law. If there was no Law then there would be no penalty. This promise of righteousness comes to us because of God's grace and His faith. Campbell says this about faith.

On the other hand, the promise was given "through" ($\delta\iota\alpha$) the righteousness of faith, i.e., God having infused faith into Abram, a Chaldean sun worshiper, counted him righteous on the basis of *his faith*, and through the agency of this faith gave him and his seed the promise. We must keep in mind that Abram in himself *had no faith* in God. When God infused faith in him, this faith became *his own personal faith*, which enabled him to be counted righteous, hence, qualified to be given the promise. If there is any good in any person it has its origin in God (Matt. 12:34; Luke 18:19). Campbell, Ernest R. *A Commentary on Romans Chapters 1—8*, Romans 8:13

Verse 16

A summary of verses 1—15 restating that it was Abraham's faith before the Law that allowed him of being the father of all who believe including those under the Law (Israel) and those not under the Law (the Gentiles). Stam makes a point in his commentary on Romans that as Abraham is called our father, Sarah could be called the mother of us all since she is the woman of grace whereas Hagar is the woman of Law (Galatians 4:22—31).

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