

Romans

Bible Study

All Saved by Faith

Romans 4:6—15

A case was made in the last lessons that Abraham was justified by faith, not works. If his justification came about because of works then he would have something to boast about. It would have been his work, not God's as the reason he was saved. Works and faith need to be separated and put in their proper place. Many people put works and faith on the same level by saying that faith saves and works finishes the process of salvation. They would say that works is absolutely necessary for salvation.

This argument is debunked by Paul as he shows us that Abraham was declared righteous (justified) completely apart from works. However, there are times when God require works as proof of a true faith. Those who had a true faith would truly do the required works. This was true for those who believe within Israel. If they believed that Jesus was their Messiah, then they would do what God required, including baptism. Baptism did not save them, but if not done, it would prove a person did not have a genuine faith. This can be seen in Luke 7:30 when the Pharisees rejected the council of God by not being baptized and by doing so, declared themselves to be non-believers. This goes along with James 2:26 that says faith without works is dead. Paul is now going to apply some of these ideas to King David.

David's blessing (verses 6—8)

Paul quotes part of Psalm 32 where David declares a man is blessed to have his sins forgiven. Psalm 32 was written about David's sin with Bathsheba showing his great relief and happiness to be forgiven, not only the sin of coveting (the 10th commandment), but also of the murder of Bathsheba's husband (the 6th commandment). These were serious and intentional sins that had no remedy within the Mosaic Law (Numbers 15:29—31). So, how was David able to have his sins forgive?

This is where God steps in and supersedes the Law. Since the Law was lacking any path back to God, God accepted David's humble and contrite heart and credited him with righteousness. Although God forgave David, David and Bathsheba paid the price of their sin by having their child die. However, he was justified without any works performed on the part of David. It is faith that saves, never works. David was saved by faith, as was Abraham and as we are. However, our demonstration of faith differs from how David would demonstrate his faith. David needed to prove his faith thorough the works of the Law. As in the case of Abraham, if David were to earn his righteousness by works, then salvation would not be by God's grace. David could do nothing to get rid of that sin, other than to come to God with a contrite heart. He needed to depend upon God to cover his sin and to make it possible for him to come into God's presence.

There are two things different for us today in this Age of Grace. First, we do not need to come to God confessing our sins to have our sins forgiven every time we sin. This is because God has already dealt with our sins; past, present and future. People in Israel needed to not only confess their personal sins, but also the sins of the nation (Daniel 9:20; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Leviticus 26:40). The second thing that is different from us today is that Israel's sins were covered, hidden from God, until Jesus Christ's death dealt fully with them (Romans 3:25).

It is the blessing that is in view in this passage, not salvation. The blessing comes from the forgiveness of sins, which must happen before a person can be declared righteous and receive eternal life. Sins before the cross were covered because they had not been permanently taken care of. As Romans 3:25 states, God passed over the sins previously committed. The sins of David were not done away with, they were covered until fully dealt with when Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of the world (Romans

8:3; 1 John 2:2). That includes all sins, past, present and future. If this were not the case, God could not declare us righteous and He could then bring condemnation upon us (Romans 8:1).

Blessing upon all who believe (verses 9—12)

This blessing of salvation is available to all people in all dispensations, the circumcised and the uncircumcised. David was saved by faith and demonstrated that faith by following the Law. Although he certainly broke the Law, he was said to be a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14) because he always humbled himself before God when confronted with sin (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51).

This blessing, given to all believers, is exemplified in Abraham, who was saved and blessed before he was circumcised. This blessing continued even after he was circumcised, being the father of those saved by faith whether of Israel, under Law, or Paul, under the Mystery.

Abraham is an example of salvation for all believers. All believers come to God by faith and then prove their faith through God-defined works. Israel believers, under Law, came to God by faith and then needed to do the works of the Law, but the works did not have any saving power (Romans 3:20—28; James 2:14—26). The man who said he believed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, yet was not baptized (Acts 2:38) proved that he did not have a true faith. Their salvation was based on believing, then doing what God commanded.

The same is true today. We are to believe in the person of Jesus Christ, and by faith add nothing, since Jesus took care of the work on the cross through His death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1—4). Those who add works to salvation in this age of Grace are going against God by adding their own works, deciding individually what would please Him.

The promise to Abraham (verses 13—15)

Many people go astray when reading about blessings promised to Abraham. Paul had just finished connecting Abraham with Israel and the Church. From these verses, many try to fit blessings promised to Israel into this Dispensation of Grace. Abraham was promised much land, many descendants and physical blessings (Genesis 12:1—3; 15:18—21). Many connect these blessings given to Abraham to the Church, the Body of Christ, because Paul called Abraham our father (Romans 4:11—12, 16) and heirs of his promises (Galatians 3:27—29). Even many solid fundamental Christians confuse promises given to Abraham with promises for the Church.

It must be understood that physical promises given to Abraham were passed on through the son of promise, Isaac. They were specifically then passed on through Jacob. In other words, the promise of land, descendants and wealth are for believing Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. This brings up another misunderstanding. Abraham was promised a city, built by God (Hebrews 11:10; 12:22). This city is the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:10—14). This city is seen by most fundamental believers as being heaven, and is viewed as the place we will reside as we rule with Christ on this earth.

This interpretation requires a great deal of creative explanation and spiritual gymnastics. It ignores Israel's special and specific earthly promises and gives them to the Church. It also removes the Church's heavenly promises completely. Paul specifically says that we are going to be ruling angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Ours is a heavenly abode and domain (Philippians 3:20), while Israel will be given to rule over the earth. All of creation (heaven and earth) will be populated by believers as we rule over our specifically assigned realms, Israel on the earth and we (the Church) in the heavenly realms.

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