

## Romans Session 57 Abraham Justified by Grace 3 Not by the Law 1

*Romans 4:13-15 (NASB)*

<sup>23</sup> *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

<sup>24</sup> *For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;*

<sup>25</sup> *for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.*

We have already seen in our studies that Abraham was not justified by Circumcision, but by faith & Grace.

Paul's second point to the Roman Church was that Abraham was not only not justified by Circumcision, but also was not justified by the Law of Moses.

Again, the chronology of the Jewish Scriptures proves his point.

As every Jew well knew, the law was not revealed to Moses until more than five hundred years after Abraham lived, and that patriarch obviously had no way of knowing what the law required.

Man, has never been able to come to God by means of an outward ceremony or standard of conduct.

When Abraham was declared right with God, he was neither circumcised nor in possession of the Mosaic law.

Circumcision had not yet been required by God and the law had not yet been revealed by God.

Therefore, **the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

**The promise to Abraham** was embodied in God's covenant with Abraham, in which the patriarch was told that **his descendants** would be heirs of the world;

*Genesis 12:3 (NASB)*

<sup>3</sup> *And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

*Genesis 15:5 (NASB)*

<sup>5</sup> *And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."*

*Genesis 18:18 (NASB)*

<sup>18</sup> *since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?*

*Genesis 22:18 (NASB)*

<sup>18</sup> *"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

In analyzing God's promise to Abraham, four significant factors emerge.

First, the **promise** involved a land, in which Abraham would live but that would not be possessed until some five centuries later, when Joshua led the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan.

Second, the **promise** involved a people, who would be so numerous that they could not be numbered, like the dust of the earth and the stars in the sky. Eventually, Abraham would become the father of many nations.

Third, the **promise** involved a blessing of the entire world through Abraham's descendants.

Fourth, the **promise** would be fulfilled in the giving of a Redeemer, who would be a descendant of Abraham through whom the whole world would be blessed by the provision of Salvation.

That promise to Abraham was a preaching to him of the gospel.

***Galatians 3:8 (NASB)***

<sup>8</sup> *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."*

Abraham believed that gospel, and even when Isaac, the sole divinely-promised heir, was about to be offered as a sacrifice, Abraham trusted that somehow God would provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering.

***Genesis 22:3-8 (NASB)***

<sup>3</sup> *So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.*

<sup>4</sup> *On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.*

<sup>5</sup> *Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."*

<sup>6</sup> *Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.*

<sup>7</sup> *Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"*

<sup>8</sup> *Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.*

Through the writer of Hebrews, the Lord gives a beautiful revelation of the extent of Abraham's understanding and faith.

***Hebrews 11:17-19 (NASB)***

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;*

<sup>18</sup> *it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."*

<sup>19</sup> *He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

Jesus told the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders,

*John 8:56 (NASB)*

<sup>56</sup> *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."*

In a way that is not explained, Abraham foresaw the coming of the Messiah, who would be born as one of his promised descendants.

It was through that descended Messiah, the Christ, that Abraham would bless the entire world and be **heir of the world**.

Referring to the Hebrew text of Genesis 22:17 and 18, Paul gives God's exegesis of His own Word, declaring;

*Galatians 3:16 (NASB)*

<sup>16</sup> *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.*

Later in the same chapter the apostle says of all believers, Gentile as well as Jew;

*Galatians 3:29 (NASB)*

<sup>29</sup> *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

In Him they become part of that single spiritual seed, **"that is Christ."**

All believers are one in Jesus Christ, **"one spirit with Him"** (1Cor 6:17)

Because they are identified with God's only begotten Son, believers become themselves children of God.

*Romans 8:16-17 (NASB)*

<sup>16</sup> *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*  
<sup>17</sup> *and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

It is not human descent from Abraham but spiritual descent from him, by following his example of faith, that makes a believer an heir both with Abraham and with Christ.

As Paul reminds the Corinthians, most of whom doubtless were Gentiles, human descent means nothing as far as a person's standing before God is concerned.

*1 Corinthians 3:21-23 (NASB)*

<sup>21</sup> *So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,*  
<sup>22</sup> *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,*  
<sup>23</sup> *and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.*

On the other hand, Jesus told the unbelieving Jewish leaders that, although they physically descended from Abraham, spiritually they were sons of their father the devil.

*John 8:44 (NASB)*

*44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Justification has never been through the Law, just as it has never been through circumcision.

The Greek of that phrase is *anarthrous*, that is, it has no definite article, the being inserted by translators.

Paul therefore was speaking not only of the Mosaic law but of God's Law in its broadest sense, referring to all of God's commandments and standards.

He was also speaking of the general principle of human law keeping in which many Jews trusted for salvation.

As Paul clarifies later in the epistle, God's law;

*Romans 7:12 (NASB)*

*12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

*Galatians 3:21 (NASB)*

*21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.*

You see the Law was never given as a means of salvation, even for Jews.

*Galatians 3:10 (NASB)*

*10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."*

The person who trusts in his ability to save himself by law-keeping is cursed because of the impossibility of perfectly keeping God's law.

Paul spoke of his own efforts at law-keeping, and said;

*Philippians 3:7-8 (NASB)*

*7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

*8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,*

He said it was rubbish and loss.

God has never recognized any righteousness but the **righteousness of faith** in Him, and that righteousness, like His imparted and imputed righteousness, comes by means of His own gracious provision.

Jesus is not only the object of our faith but is also its author and perfecter;

*Hebrews 12:2 (NASB)*

*2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Abraham was justified because he believed God's promise, and, as Paul has already declared in this epistle, that belief, *"was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3)*

In exactly the same way, when a person believes God's promise of salvation through trust in His Son Jesus Christ, that act of faith is reckoned to him as Christ's own righteousness.

**1 Corinthians 1:30 (NASB)**

*<sup>30</sup> But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)**

*<sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Abraham's trust was not in what he possessed but in what he was promised.

**Hebrews 11:8-10 (NASB)**

*<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

*<sup>9</sup> By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;*

*<sup>10</sup> for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Faith is able to receive anything God promises.

That is how we receive salvation and how we continue in our walk with him. All based on His promises.