

Homework: Read through Romans 4 each day. Circle any words or phrases that you see frequently repeated. Mark what you think is the most important/key verse in Romans 4. Create a title for the chapter (below). Write down any questions you might have.

Romans 4

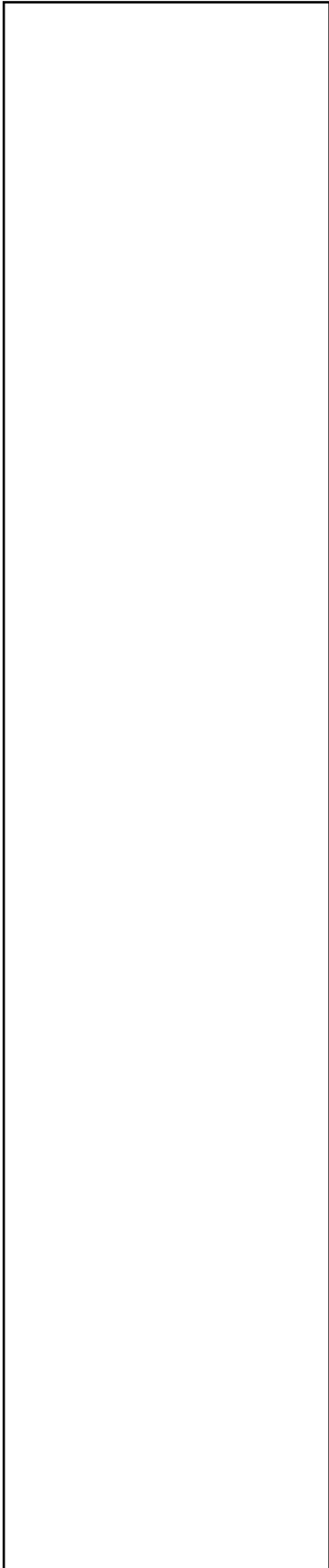
(ESV)

Chapter Title _____

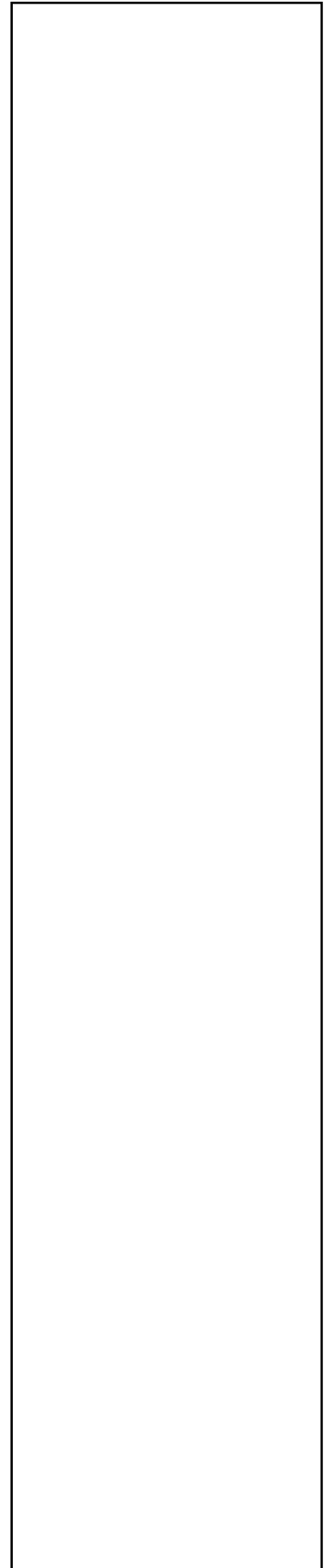
¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."
⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." ⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.
¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make

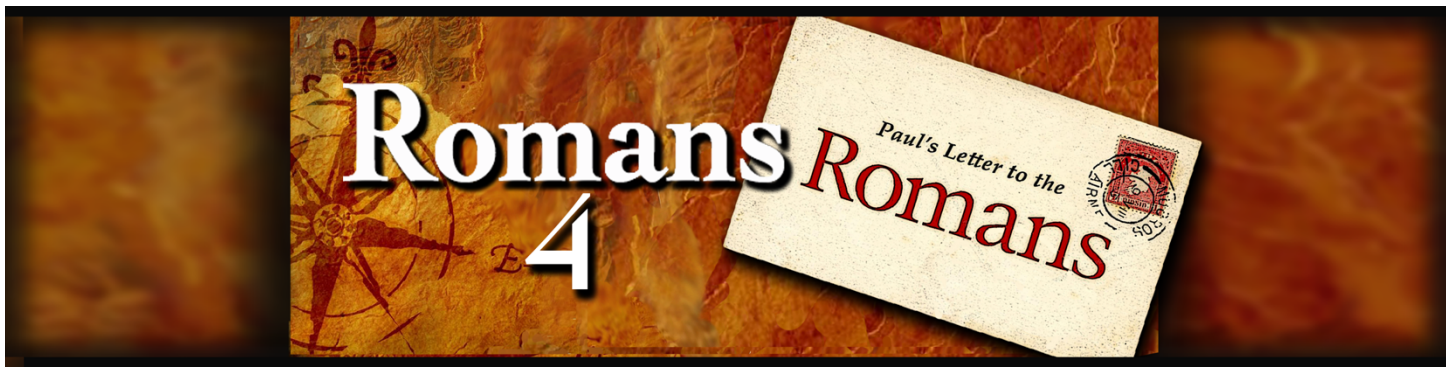
Notes

him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was



about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.





REVIEW

In Chapter 3, Paul explained that, although the Jews were given the blessings of the Law, they failed to obey the law, so they are just as guilty as those who did not have the law. The Jews truly made the Law their “god” because they had left the promises and commands of Yahweh to pursue their own “righteousness” by works. They gained nothing through this but the wrath of God.

The purpose of the Law was not to make them holy, but to clearly expose how truly depraved they and we are, and how helpless they/we all are to change who we are, to deal with the sin in our lives by our own resources. The Law reveals both our sin and the righteousness of God. He proved His **righteousness** by sending His Son to purchase our **redemption** through His blood. That redemption only comes to us through the gracious gift of God, and can only be received through **faith**. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Law is **fulfilled** (satisfied).



Bible Study Technique

Lists/Outlines—Make lists and/or outlines to keep track of key points, details, or evidence. These are very helpful when organizing your ideas or revealing the structure of your study.

Throughout Romans, Paul is systematically framing the essentials of the Gospel:

1. There is no excuse for not knowing that **God exists**. ([Romans 1:18-20](#))
2. **All have sinned**, offending and separating them from God. ([Romans 3:10-12, 23](#))

Key Doctrine #1
Romans 1:18-
3:20

Key Doctrine #1 in Romans

Mankind's Sinfulness—Sin separates every human from God; only Jesus Christ can reconcile God and man. (JM)

3. **God is the rightful Judge**; He has the absolute authority to judge because He created the human race, and He knows the heart of every human being. ([Romans 2:2](#))
4. All people are **accountable to God** to answer for their sins, but no one can atone for their own **guilt** before God. ([Romans 3:19-20](#))
5. God sent sinless Jesus to die as the **atonement** (payment) **for our sins**; this made it possible for God to be just and merciful. ([Romans 3:24-26](#))

Key Doctrine #2
Romans 3:21-5:21

Key Doctrine #2 in Romans

Justification By Faith—Complete freedom from judgment and the bondage of sin comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ. (JM)

6. **Atonement/Redemption/Justification** are given to us through **faith in the free gift of Jesus**. (Romans 3:24-26)

7. Believers have been **reconciled** to God by Jesus' **sacrifice of atonement (propitiation)**, as He suffered the wrath of God in our place. (Romans 3:24-26)

In Romans 4 Paul gives an illustration of **how** God makes a person righteous. The Gentiles were not the ones Paul had to convince concerning their sinfulness; his problem was convincing the Jews. For this reason, he used Abraham (the spiritual father of the Jews) as an **example** of how God makes a person righteous. If Paul could prove that Abraham was justified by faith alone, it would demolish the Jew's claim that Abraham was justified by works of the Law. **(RSB)** If Paul could convince them that Abraham was made right with God through **faith alone**, then the Jews *might* admit that they must be saved in the same way.

Paul wanted to show that this "new" doctrine of being saved by faith was not really new at all; it was as old as Abraham. Abraham was an outstanding example of one who lived by faith.

Read Romans 4:1-5

1. What does Abraham have to boast about? Why? What does it mean to "boast before God?"
2. What is justification? (Refer back at Lesson 2 page 16. [Romans 3:24](#))
3. In verse 3, Paul quotes [Genesis 15:6](#). Paul is not defending "his" Gospel (2:16) as his own great idea, but proving how his Gospel was God's original plan from the very beginning! And he proved it through Old Testament scripture, his authority! How was Abraham justified? How did Abraham act in faith? Where was faith seen in his life? ([James 2:21-22](#))
4. What is the meaning (essence) of the word "wages?" (4)

Genesis 15:6 makes no mention of "works" on Abraham's part, only of the **trust** he had in God. Although faith was Abraham's "action," it contributed **nothing** to the result of Abraham's righteousness before God, which was God's own gift. While faith involves human activity, it is not a "work" of merit. The righteousness of God was "**counted**" (credited, the idea that something of value was put into Abraham's "account") to Abraham through faith and not earned by him.

5. Who is "the one who works?" Is that person justified? Why? (5)
6. Who is "the one who does not work?" Is that person justified? Why?
7. Who is "him" in verse 5 and what does he do? Why is that important?

By characterizing God as “*him who justifies the ungodly*,” Paul includes Abraham among the ungodly, whose works provide no ground for their justification—a bold contradiction of Jewish tradition about Abraham’s personal righteousness, but one supported by the biblical record. (RSB)

Read Romans 4:6-8

Paul briefly mentions another great Jewish leader who lived by faith. David knew the **blessing** (mercy and grace) of God. David's sins were many and great, but he came to God in faith, believing that God would forgive and accept him. Paul quotes David’s words from Psalm 32:1-2.

8. In what ways was David blessed?

Pardoned people are the only blessed people. (MHC)

Read Romans 4:9-12

Here Paul turns us back to the example of Abraham. In Genesis 15, God called Abraham to a **covenant relationship**. Covenants are similar to a contract, but they are *relational* and *personal*. (WW)

The Abrahamic covenant was a one-sided covenant. That is, Yahweh made a promise to Abraham, yet required nothing of Abraham in return; in fact, when God made the covenant, Abraham was sound asleep! (Genesis 15:12-21). Abraham was certainly a beneficiary to the covenant, but he was not a formal party to it. That's why there were no punishments for failing to keep his part (as there were in the Mosaic covenant, Deuteronomy 28-29). God **promised** Abraham a huge family that would inherit land in Canaan and bring universal blessing to all humanity. God’s promise in His covenant with Abraham didn’t require anything of him; it was purely grace from God.

The Abrahamic Covenant was accompanied by an outward “sign” as a reminder to Abraham and his ancestors of their call and commitment as God’s chosen people. That sign was circumcision. Abraham was circumcised 14 years *after* he had answered God's call to the covenant relationship. Circumcision was a religious sign and ritual so important to the Jews that they believed a person's salvation depended on it. They thought the man who was not circumcised was not a Jew, no matter who his parents were. If a Gentile accepted the Jewish religion, he had to be circumcised.

9. Under what circumstances was righteousness credited to Abraham?

The “gateway” to a right relationship with God was **not circumcision**; the gateway was **faith**. Circumcision was the sign and seal that Abraham had *already entered* into that relationship. A **sign** is a mark by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others. Circumcision is an outward physical ‘mark’ that distinguishes God’s chosen people (the Jews) from the Gentiles, pointing to the fact that Abraham had believed what God had told him and was set apart to God through faith alone. It was a visible reminder of the Lord’s promise to ‘cut out’ of this fallen world a people for Himself. (SS)

A **seal** marked off ownership—people knew to whom an object belonged based on the seal affixed to it. Circumcision was the mark of God’s ownership, tangible proof that those who bore the mark actually belonged to the Lord and would inherit all His promises if they had faith in Him. His circumcision sealed—demonstrated and proved—the righteousness he had already been given credit for. (SS)

10. What other signs or seals can you think of?

11. What is the result of Abraham being justified before he was circumcised? (11-12, also 7-9)

12. What must the uncircumcised do for righteousness to be credited to them? What must the circumcised do for righteousness to be credited to them?

The doctrine of justification by faith means that we are given right standing (righteousness) before God, not through merit, not through the works of the Law, not by some ritual or ceremony, but by faith alone in Him who is our Savior and Lord.

Read Romans 4:13-16

Abraham received God's promise that he would become "*heir to the world.*" "*World*" here refers to the creation, the physical world. There is no obvious use of the word "heirs" in the Genesis account of Abraham, but he is promised "*offspring like the dust of the earth,*" possession of the land of Canaan and being a blessing for all peoples on earth through him or his offspring. It is clear from scripture that God's purpose was for Abraham and his offspring to influence the destiny of the whole world; aside from the promise of his physical offspring, it most importantly points to Christ. (NIVSB) ([Genesis 12:1-3](#), [Genesis 17:3-8](#))

13. How did Abraham and his offspring become heirs of the world?

14. Can those who depend on the law become heirs of the world? Why?

15. What does the law bring?

16. What is the meaning of "*where there is no law there is no transgression*"? ([Romans 3:20](#), [Romans 5:13](#), [Romans 7:7, 9](#))

Where there is no law there is still sin, but it does not have the same degree of seriousness as a **transgression** (overstepping a clearly defined line/command). (NIVSB) Since it's sin, it still condemns. God did not **give** Abraham the promise based upon law, but based upon faith. God did not **fulfill** the promise based upon law, but based upon faith. This promise was given, and Abraham was accepted as righteous before God some 400 years **before** the Mosaic law came into existence. That does **NOT** mean that there was absolutely no "law" in effect at the time, or that there was absolutely no violation of any "law" because then we would have to reject the accounts the flood of Noah, the tower of Babel and all the other places where sin is recorded (and punished) prior to the coming of the Mosaic law. While there was no written law from God, [Romans 2:15](#) shows that God has given each of us a conscience (the soul, which distinguishes between what is morally good and bad). His law has been written on our hearts.

The phrase “*but where there is no law there is no transgression*” is a parenthetical comment between the main idea “*For the law brings wrath....That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace....*” The NIV has “*And where there is no law there is no transgression*” as a complete sentence by itself, making it much more evident that it is parenthetical.

17. This promise was dependent on two things, the _____ of God and the _____ of Abraham. (16)

Paul made it clear that the only true path to righteousness is **complete dependence** on divine **grace** (the merciful, loving-kindness of God).

18. Who is Abraham the father of?

Read Romans 4:17-22

Paul again returns to Genesis and God’s promise to Abraham, the promise of not just **A** son, but **many** sons/descendants. God regards Abraham to be the father of Jews and believing Gentiles alike, no matter how others (especially the Jews) may view him.

19. What 2 characteristics does Paul use to identify the God in whom Abraham believed, characteristics that make the God of Abraham completely unique from other “gods?” (17)

Abraham believed in the God who:

- “*Gives life to the dead*”—specifically referring to the birth of Isaac by giving life to Abraham and Sarah’s “dead” bodies to allow them to conceive (Genesis 18). Paul also points to the resurrection of Christ, as well as Christ giving new life to the “dead” spirits of His elect. ([Ephesians 2:4-6](#), [Colossians 2:13](#))! That’s US!
- “*Calls into existence the things that do not exist*”—God has the ability to create something/everything out of nothing, as He did at Creation, a nation emerging from a barren womb (the birth of Isaac), and the virgin birth of Jesus.

By the standards of this world, Abraham’s belief (hope, confidence) that Sarah would bear his child was foolish (both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they were told!). Yet they acted in faith, and Isaac was conceived. Belief is the first requirement for receiving what God has promised. Abraham trusted in God’s power and His character, and gained assurance that the promise would be fulfilled, and he grew in his faith and glorified God. He rejected unbelief and did not waver, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. Faith does not refuse to face reality but looks beyond all difficulties to God and his promises; faith brings glory to Him. Paul indicates that **true faith is directed toward God and not circumstances**, toward God’s Word and not toward the human situation. **(RSB)**

Read Romans 4:23-25

Abraham was justified because he believed in God, who brought life from the dead; in the same way, we are justified by believing in Him.

20. Jesus was _____^(NIV) up (to death) for our _____^(NIV) and was raised (to life) for our _____.

Through justification, sinners are *credited with* and *clothed with the righteousness of Christ*, even though we remain in a sinning state. We have been **declared righteous**, but await the **completion** of our righteousness, our glorification and the destruction of our sinful natures in the last day.

Christ's death and resurrection are two separate aspects of His one saving work but they are inseparable. In His death, Christ bore the legal penalty for our guilt. In raising Jesus from the dead, the Father vindicated Jesus, nullifying the sentence of death, and declaring Him to be righteous. **(RSB)**

- 21.** What did you select as the Key Verse(s) in Romans 4? Why?
- 22.** Create a basic outline for Romans 4. (Hint: Use the “**Read Romans 4**” instructions provided in this lesson (see p. 34, 35, etc.) to act as the divisions/sections for your outline. What is the main idea (title) in that section? That's the heading for your outline!
- 23.** Write a summary of Romans 4.

References:

- Brock, Charles. *Romans: The Road to Righteousness (A Bible Study Guide)*. Church Growth International, Inc., 1996.
- Cauley, Kevin. “For Where No Law Is There is No Transgression – Explain Romans 4:15 and 5:13?” GE Watkins.net website, [https:// gewatkins.net/for-where-no-law-is-there-is-no-transgression-explain-romans-415-and-513/](https://gewatkins.net/for-where-no-law-is-there-is-no-transgression-explain-romans-415-and-513/). **(KC)**
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