



In the previous passage, Paul put the spotlight on a number of outward, obvious sins – the kind that we find it easy to point out and condemn. In this section, however, he shines the light on those who tend to see themselves as exempt from blame – moralistic, religious, self-righteous people – and the verdict is the same.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Romans 3:21-4:25

²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -- ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. ²⁹ Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about -- but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Where else has the phrase "a righteousness from God" occurred in Romans? What has Paul dealt with in between, and why?

WORD STUDIES

How many times do these words occur in this passage?

righteousness

faith

justify (or justification)

Using a Bible dictionary, look up the following words and jot down a definition:

- *justification*

- *redemption*

- *atonement*

How would you explain the phrase in verse 26, "*just and the justifier*"?

Paul seems to be saying here in 4:1-3 that Abraham was justified by faith, not works. How can you reconcile that with James' assertion in James 2:24? (Hint: Paul and James may be using the word "justify" in different ways. Define what point each writer is making.)

Where is Paul quoting from when he talks about David (vs. 7-8)?

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.¹⁴ For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,¹⁵ because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring -- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed -- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead -- since he was about a hundred years old -- and that Sarah's womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."²³ The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness -- for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What is Paul's point in 3:29-30 and how does he support it in 4:9-11?

Explain verse 15. What is the purpose of the Law?
(Look up these verses and jot down what they say...)

 **Romans 3:20**

 **Galatians 3:19-25**

Where does the quote in verse 17 come from?

Does verse 17 refer to Abraham being a spiritual father or a physical father?

Does verse 18 refer to Abraham being a spiritual father or a physical father?

Where in the Old Testament did God promise Abraham he would be the "father of many nations"?

What two examples of "life out of death" does Paul refer to in verses 18-25?

LIFE RESPONSE: What Does it Mean to Me?

How do you think the average Old Testament person became “justified”, or “saved”, that is, got to heaven? What did they need to believe in?

Based on Romans 4:18-25, answer this question: Before a person becomes a Christian, are they spiritually sick or spiritually dead? (see also Ephesians 2:1-10). How does your answer affect your view of the role of good works in relationship to salvation?

Has it been difficult for you to accept that your standing before God, His attitude towards you, has nothing to do with any good thing you’ve ever done?

