

## Romans Chapter Four

The Case of Abraham (vv. 1-5)

**VERSE 1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found** (Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα [*interrog.part. tis what? + conj oun + fut.act.ind.1p. eipon say + pf.act.infin. eurisko find + noun acc.m.s. Abraham + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. propator forefather + pro.gen.p. ego + prep kata + noun acc.f.s. sarx flesh*])?

**VERSE 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God** (εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραάμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα, ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς θεόν. [*part. ei if + conj gar + noun nom.m.s. Abraham + prep ek + noun gen.nt.p. ergon + aor.pass.ind.3s. dikaiō justify + pres.act.ind.3s. echo have + noun acc.nt.s. kauchema basis for boasting + conj alla but + neg. ou + prep pros + noun acc.m.s. theos*]).

**VERSE 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS** (τί γὰρ ἡ γραφή λέγει; Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην [*interrog. tis what? + conj gar + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. graphe Scripture + pres.act.ind.3s. lego + aor.act.ind.3s. pisteuo believe + conj. de + d.a.w/noun dat.m.s. theos + conj. kai + aor.pass.ind.3s. logizomai credit + pro.dat.m.s. autos + prep eis + noun acc.f.s. dikaiosune*])."

**VERSE 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due** (τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθὸς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα [*conj. de + d.a.w/pres.dep.part.dat.m.s. ergazomai work + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. misthos wage + neg ou + pres.pass.ind.3s. logizomai credit + prep kata + noun acc.f.s. charis grace; "favor" + conj. alla + prep kata + noun acc.nt.s. ophilema debt, what is due*]).

**VERSE 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness** (τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ

τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἀσεβῆ λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην [*conj de + neg me + d.a.w/pres.dep.part.dat.m.s. ergazomai + conj. de but + pres.act.part.dat.m.s. pisteuo believe + conj. de + prep epi + d.a.w/pres.act.part.acc.m.ss. dikaios justify + d.a.w/adj.acc.m.s. asebes ungodly + pres.pass.ind.3s. logizomai + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. pistis + pro.gen.m.s. autos his + prep. eis + noun acc.f.s. dikasosune*]),

**ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-5**

1. Here Paul proceeds to document from the OT the doctrine he has introduced in chapter three.
2. There he argued for justification by faith over against justification by works (3:20, 22, 26, 27, 28 30).
3. He appeals first of all to the example of Abraham.
4. Abraham was at the heart and center of the Jewish position.
5. “What then” is transitional, and not inferential.
6. The idea here is: “What was the case as far as Abraham was concerned?”
7. The designation “our forefather” is not to be taken as forefather by natural generation (v. 11-12 “and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.”).
8. So Abraham is the spiritual godfather of all who are like him in the matter of justification.
9. “Our” refers therefore to believers.
10. “According to the flesh” is not to be taken in a negative sense as something sinful, or even the energy of the flesh.
11. It is to be understood as follows: “has found according to the flesh.”
12. In other words, what was his life’s experience with regards to the issue of justification?
13. What we shall say or conclude is left to the evidence Paul supplies in the verses to follow.
14. Verse 2 opens with a hypothetical 1<sup>st</sup> class condition, and follows with a logical supposition.
15. If Abraham was justified by works he has grounds for boasting.
16. That is the logical conclusion arising from what he “has found” hypothetically.
17. Of course Paul is not making a supposition that has any merit; it is merely a hypothesis for the sake of refutation.
18. Paul categorically denies the conclusion with the words “not before God.”
19. How does Paul disprove the first class condition and its conclusion—Abraham has grounds for boasting?
20. This is done simply by quoting Scripture (v. 3).
21. He cites Gen. 15:6 which says nothing about good deeds/works.

22. The term “credited” here, as in the Hebrew, means placed to his account (i.e., it (+R) was imputed to him).
23. It is important to look at the context of Genesis 15 in regards to this matter.
24. Abraham on this occasion in his life had been justified years before this episode (Gal. 3:8).
25. Abraham was born into a family of believers; his father Terah was a believer.
26. We do not know when exactly Abraham first believed in a coming Messiah for salvation.
27. We do know that at age 75 Abraham was presented with the call to the Abrahamic Covenant while living in his home city of Ur (Acts 7:2-3; cp. Gen. 12:1-4).
28. In Genesis 15 ten years had passed and Abraham was still without progeny (a son), and on this occasion the covenant previously made with him was reiterated, and Abraham exercised faith again in the promise of descendants (innumerable; Gen. 15:5-6).
29. Abraham believed, and for his faith (initial) he was imputed with +R which amounts to justification.
30. No works were involved.
31. By faith, and faith alone, Abraham was justified, and so Paul proves the point of verse 2 that Abraham had no grounds to boast.
32. It is important to note that this quotation is obviously not to be understood in the sense that this is when Abraham was credited with +R.
33. Gen. 15:6 should be taken retrospectively.
34. It should read translating the Hebrew as: “And he had believed (Hiphil perfect *aman* to believe in the hiphil) in the LORD; and He credited it to him (Qal impf.3s.w/3s.suff. *chashab*) as righteousness (*tsedaqah*).”
35. The subject of v. 4 has to do with the person who is into salvation by works (“to the one who works”).
36. Such a person is not acclimated to the principle of grace (“is not credited as grace”).
37. The grace credit is only for those who believe for salvation.
38. Otherwise, “the one who works”, must come up with “what is due.”
39. Of course, no one can pay this price as it would require absolute human perfection.
40. Again, “there is not one righteous, no not one.”
41. By total contrast we have in verse 5 “the one who does not work” (i.e., for justification/salvation).
42. Instead, he “believes in Him who justifies the ungodly” and his “faith is credited as righteousness.”
43. When a person exercises faith in Christ, God credits/imputes to his account “righteousness” (+ R).
44. The formula: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”, is similar to that used for Phinehas in reference to his zeal for the Lord: “And it was credited to him for righteousness to all generations forever” (Ps. 106:31).
45. But in that instance Phinehas a believer exercised faith plus works.
46. There is a justification by faith plus works, and it is reserved for the believer (taught in Jam. 2:14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26).

#### The Case of David (vv. 6-8)

**VERSE 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works** (καθάπερ καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει τὸν μακαρισμὸν τοῦ

ἀνθρώπου ᾧ ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων [*conj. kathaper just like + conj kai also + noun nom.m.s. David + pres.act.ind.3s. lego + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. makarismos blessedness, happiness, blessing + pro.dat.m.s. hos to whom + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. theos + pres.dep.ind.3s. logizomai + noun acc.f.s. dikaiosune + prep choris apart from + noun gen.nt.p. ergon*]):

**VERSE 7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN**

**FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED** (Μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι [*adj.nom.m.p. makarios blessed + pro.gen.m.p. hos + aor.pass.ind.3p. aphiemis forgive + d.a.w/noun nom.f.p. anomia lawlessness + conj kai + pro.gen.m.p. hos + aor.pass.ind.3p. epikalupto cover + d.a.w/noun nom.f.p. harmartia sin*]).

**VERSE 8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO**

**ACCOUNT** (μακάριος ἀνὴρ οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσηται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν. [*adj.nom.m.s. makarios + noun nom.m.s. aner man + pro.gen.m.s. hos + neg. ou + neg. me + aor.dep.subj.3s. logizomai + noun nom.m.s. kurios Lord + noun acc.f.s. hamartia sin*])."

**ANALYSIS: VERSES 6-8**

1. Here Paul supplies another citation to document justification by faith quoting from the OT.
2. This example augments the primary believer feathered in this chapter.
3. This is shown by the fact that Paul returns to the main character in vv. 9ff.—Abraham.
4. Hence, the words “just as David also.”
5. The appeal is to David and Psalm 32:1-2.
6. David had something to say when he “speaks of the blessing on the man whom God credits/imputes righteousness apart from works.”
7. The “blessing” is the pre-eminent blessing as it brings deliverance from eternal condemnation and qualifies the one who believers for eternal life.
8. “Apart from works” presents this blessing as one that comes by faith and faith alone (cf. 3:28 “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works.” Also, 9:11, 32; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 3:10; Eph. 2:9; 2 Tim. 1:9).
9. +R is imputed to those who believe in Jesus Christ.
10. What David bore witness to was forgiveness (v. 7) and a non-imputation.
11. The opposite of good works is “lawless deeds” or “sins.”
12. “Lawless deeds” views STA activity as involvement in antinomianism.
13. The blessed ones are not those who have good works qualifying them for justification, but whose sins are not laid to their account.
14. “Imputes righteousness” (v. 6) is synonymous with justification.

15. Justification, in addition to the imputation of + R, also involves the forgiveness of sins.
16. The cancellation of the sin debt against us is expressed in two parallel ways in v. 7— forgiveness and covering up.
17. Forgiveness does not define justification, though justification must include remission of sins.
18. When a person is saved all their past sins are forgiven and forgotten.
19. The latter is noted in the words “have been covered” (hapax aor.pass.ind.3p. *epikalupto* cover over).
20. Illustration: stained walls are made to look like new with a fresh coat of paint.
21. The “blessed is” of verse 8 is different from the “blessed” of verse 7.
22. In verse 8 sin is in the singular, while in verse 7 it is in the plural.
23. This is not a case of a collective singular.
24. The sin not imputed in v. 8 is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness.
25. And that is the sin of rejection of the Savior.
26. It is referred to in the NT as the eternal sin, the unpardonable sin and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
27. Since Jesus Christ died for all the sins of humanity, the basis for eternal condemnation cannot be based on sins.
28. This is what we call the law of double jeopardy.
29. So the phrase translated “will not take into account” can be translated “the LORD will not [ever; double negative) impute.”
30. The verb is *logizomai* translated in v. 6 “credits” (or “imputes”).
31. The citation from Psalm 32 and its contribution to Paul’s polemic (argument) approaches the subject from a different angle.
32. The thrust is the issue of human sinning and the sidestepping of temporal (sins plural) and eternal consequences (avoiding the imputation of the unforgiveable sin, which only the unsaved can commit).
33. Justification (Ph 1; imputation of +R) embraces remission, excludes good works, sidesteps the imputation of the unpardonable sin, and is dependant upon faith.