

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Studies in Romans Series 2

No 6

The Jew is Justified Only By Faith in Jesus Christ

Scripture Reading: Romans 4:1-24

Do not say to yourself, 'This chapter is Jewish, it is not for me; I will skip on to chapter five.' To do that will be to short-change your understanding of not only the book, but also of your own justification through faith in Jesus Christ; for what applies to the Jew, applies to all. *There is no difference.* When Paul says, 'Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh' is he talking as a Jew or as a believer in Christ? Probably both. This chapter illustrates from your Bible what it means to have saving faith in Jesus Christ as a Jew, but also as a Gentile.

What about Abraham? Can you hear the Jews in Paul's day saying to Paul, 'What about Abraham? God's promise came to we Jews through Abraham and the line of Isaac, and Jacob. Did he not choose us and give us circumcision and the law. Did He not give us the Scriptures and call us, Jews, to teach others the way'?

Abraham is the Progenitor of All Who are Justified Through Faith

Remember from our last study (No. 5) that by 'justification' we mean that on the basis of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ His Son, God according to His promise, accepts that death as payment for sin and then credits the righteousness of Jesus as a gift, to all those who trust Him. How can it be that Abraham is our forefather in faith? Here is Paul's answer to all these questions:

First, Abraham Was Also Justified as a Gift Through Faith v1-5. This did not come as a wage for work (or a reward for trying) but as a gift for believing God's word about God's plans for Abraham. See Genesis 15 and especially v6. God's plan for all men is to justify those who trust Him,

not as a reward for what we do, but as a gift through believing what God says. Abraham was powerless to produce an heir. There was nothing he could do, even if he tried (try as he might, but without result. See v17-22). There was nothing he could do but to trust God.

Verse 18 in most versions gives 'against all hope believed in hope' or as Robertson gives it 'past hope upon hope he trusted' but the Greek reads more literally 'he with hope on hope believed into this.' This fits with what Paul says in verse 20.

Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God(NIV).

When Abraham had no natural ground to hope, he trusted. So with us; there is no work we can do whereby we make our selves just before God therefore we believe what He has said. We rest from our works and trust His.

How can Abraham trusting God for the birth of an heir, be an instruction for us in trusting God for our justification as sinners? God is the same. His nature has not changed. He plans to bless those who trust Him in terms of His word. His *modus operandi* is the

same. His purpose is the same. Note that although Ishmael was Abraham's firstborn through Hagar, it was His plan to establish His redemptive covenant with Abraham through Isaac, and on through the generations to Christ. See Matthew chapter 1. It is God's intention to 'bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ' Ephesians 1:3.

Second, David Confirms that God's Blessings Come as a Gift

v6-8. Look up all of Psalm 32 but especially v 1&2. David's writing confirms God's plan to justify the guilty through faith.

David like us knew he was a sinner, guilty before God. The psalm is the heart felt story of his cover up, his inner conviction, his facing up to wrongdoing, his confession and the tremendous relief that confession brought.

Then he tells of the healing and restoration he experienced as he found God in time, being kept in trouble, and the song of his heart. He tells of God's plan to teach and guide and draw him near so that he is shielded in mercy amid the miseries of wickedness.

His confession was in faith to God who covered his sin and imputed righteousness where once there stood guilt.

Being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore *it was also credited to him as righteousness* (Genesis 15:6). Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Romans 4:21-24 (NASB)

Third, Circumcision is a Sign, Not a Means to Receive God's Gift

v9-12. Paul's argument is simple. Read your Bible, Circumcision came along after God justified Abraham. Compare Genesis 15:6 with Genesis 17:10. It was given and received as a seal upon the agreement between God and Abraham. Note here, those who are followers of Abraham do so on the basis of his faith which came first, be they Jew or Gentile for this promise came to him also before he was circumcised. Read Genesis 17. Baptism does not save anyone, nor does the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, or does church membership. Just as Jews may be circumcised as a child without ever personally believing in God, so people can enter into the rites and conventions of a church without ever knowing or trusting what God says about Jesus Christ.

Fourth, The Law Does Not Make People Righteous

v13-15. Follow Paul's reasoning. God's promise came by faith, not by law. If sonship came from keeping the law, faith is empty and promise powerless. Moreover the law brings not pardon, but punishment, so then better not to have the law. By the law is the knowledge of sin, but not the power of redemption.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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