

The Book of Romans

The Account of Abraham, Part I, Section 1: “The God Who Declares the Ungodly Righteous”

Chapter 4:1-8

TERMINOLOGY COMMON TO ROMANS 3:27-31 AND ROMANS 4

Boasting; Boast	3:27	4:2
Works; to work	3:27, 28	4:2, 4-6
Law	3:27, 28, 31	4:13, 14, 15 (2x), 16
Declare righteous; righteousness	3:28, 30	4:2, 3, 5 (2x), 6, 9, 11 (2x) 13, 22
Conclude; credit; charge	3:28	4:3-6, 8-11, 22-24
Faith; believe	3:27, 28, 30	4:3, 5 (2x), 9, 11 (2x), 12-14, 16 (2x), 17-20, 24

Paul's primary Scriptural validation for the teaching of Romans in 3:21-31
(righteousness of God through faith apart from works) will now be the narrative account of Abraham (Gen. 12-24).

INTRODUCTION

Thus, what we will discover that there is no better illustration that the righteousness of God through faith is for both the Jew and the Gentile than the narrative of Abraham's faith and life!

Romans
4:1-8

INTRODUCTION

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Romans
4:1-8



**Father
Abraham!**



**Romans
4:1-2**

¹What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found and then lived out? ²Indeed, if Abraham was declared righteous from works, he has a boast, but not toward God.

Paul continues with his use of diatribe by using a question that directs us back to Ch. 3! Yet, notice...Paul leaves his question unanswered! Yes, a rhetorical style that engages his listeners...include you!

Father Abraham!



Romans
4:1-2

¹What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found and then lived out? ²Indeed, if Abraham was declared righteous from works, he has a boast, but not toward God.

Paul also uses a word that is only used here in the New Testament in this noun form: **προπάτορ** – **forefather!** Thus, Paul is pointing out that he will be discussing the physical lineage of Abraham (cf. Ps. 105-6; Is. 41:8).

Father Abraham!



Romans
4:1-2

¹What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found and then lived out? ²Indeed, if Abraham was declared righteous from works, he has a boast, but not toward God.

Paul continues his diatribe in verse 2 with more Greek nuance by using a non-committal conditional phrase:
Indeed, if Abraham was declared righteous from works...

It's important for you to know that Jewish tradition was inclined to view Abraham as righteous because he was obedient to God!

Father Abraham!



Romans
4:1-2

Father Abraham and Works!

According to Jewish literature, Abraham was revered due to “his works.”

First, there’s his excellent conduct, which included keep the Law...even though the Mosaic Law was yet to be given!

Secondly, Jewish literature points to Abraham’s faithfulness in the near sacrifice of Isaac. So Abraham’s faithful work led to righteousness and blessing!

Father Abraham!



Romans
4:1-2

Father Abraham and Works!

Lastly, later citations even suggest that Abraham's faithfulness achieved merits for his descendants!

Now, as we shall see, Paul does not diminish Abraham's character. Even so, the answer to these misguided assumptions about Abraham are found in Holy Scripture:

- Joshua 24:2 (Abraham – idolatry);
- Gen. 12:10-20 (Sarai, his sister?);
- Gen. 16:4-6 (Hagar/Ishmael);
- Gen. 20:1-18 (Sarah, sister...again!).

Father
Abraham!



Romans
4:1-2

Father Abraham and Works!

So this brings us back to the question at hand in verse 2. Do works merit a declaration of righteousness from God?

Paul doesn't directly negate his non-committal conditional phrase: *Indeed, if Abraham was declared righteous from works...*

He doesn't need to...since he already has in 3:19-20 and 3:28!

Nor does Paul retract the boast, but will address proper boasting later (5:2-3, 11); since, boasting has already been “*shut out*” (*Divine Passive*) (3:27).

Father Abraham!

Father Abraham and Works!

But what does Paul mean with the phrase: ἄλλ' οὐ πρὸς Θεόν (but not toward God)?

Paul, by the use of “toward” (πρὸς) , is referencing a person’s relationship with God, as he did in 3:19-20.

An early Church father says it this way:
*“He [Paul] says that justification by works has its glory but only in and of itself, not before God. Justification by faith, on the other hand, has glory before God.”*¹

¹Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle of Romans* (Bray, *Romans*, ACCS NT 6:109).

Romans
4:1-2



Righteousness Credited to Abraham's Account

³For what is the Scripture saying? “And Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.”

Paul now counters that Abraham's righteousness before God is NOT based upon works! And his evidence is the powerful Word of God...Gen. 15:6.

Is this verse diametrically opposite of the Jewish view of Abraham?

Romans

4:3



Righteousness Credited to Abraham's Account

³For what is the Scripture saying? “And Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.”

In Gen. 15:1-5, Yahweh reaffirms the relationship He inaugurated in Gen 12:1-3 and now expands His promise regarding Abraham's offspring, so both applications of “believed” (content and faith relationship) are included.

**Romans
4:3**

Righteousness Credited to Abraham's Account

³For what is the Scripture saying? "And Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him for righteousness."

Now in the latter half of the quote from Gen. 15:6, Paul uses a very key Greek verb: λογίζομαι – to credit or to charge. This is the first of eleven times Paul uses this verb in Ch. 4!

It's a technical accounting term. So God placed into Abraham's account righteousness, which never belonged to Abraham!

Romans
4:3

Righteousness Credited to Abraham's Account

³For what is the Scripture saying? “And Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.”

**HERE'S THE
POINT**

The action is not from Abraham's works toward God; “righteousness” accrues to Abraham because God counts something as belonging to Abraham! Abraham does **NOT** do...but **RECEIVES!**

Romans
4:3

Worker or Believer?



Romans
4:4-5

⁴Now to the one who works, the payment is not credited as a favor, but according to what is owed. ⁵But to the one who is not working, but believing on the One who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is being credited for righteousness.

Paul uses an example from the secular world...even for us, today, this makes perfect sense!

Worker  **owed wages** paid by employer (not a gift or favor; employer is obligated).

To believe is NOT to work! Faith is the direct opposite of work!

Worker or Believer?




Romans
4:4-5

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Yet, Paul drops a bomb!



Worker or Believer?




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Ungodly (ungodliness) is a very powerful and derogatory word that depicts an absolute rejection of the existence of God. Corresponding to that rejection is a dishonorable lifestyle.

So now Paul asserts that these are exactly the kind of people who God credits as righteous!

Romans 4:4-5

Worker or Believer?



Romans
4:4-5

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Essentially, Paul concludes v.5 by restating the truth of Gen. 15:6. He simply removes the specific reference to Abraham...now it is anyone who is believing in the God! God declares the ungodly righteous, whose faith is being credited for righteousness!

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

‘Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

Now Paul cites further evidence for believing on the God who declares the ungodly righteous from Ps. 32.

To introduce the quotation, Paul announces that this blessing rests on the person who is like Abraham....

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

⁶Just as David also pronounces the blessing of the person to whom God is crediting righteousness apart from works. ⁷Blessed are those whose lawless acts were forgiven and whose sins were covered over. ⁸Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will in no way charge [to his account].

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, is telling you that a person's blessedness lies in the fact that their lawless acts "were forgiven!" In Hebrew, it means that one's sins were "lifted up, taken away!"

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

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Furthermore, your sins “were covered over.” This term is a *Divine Passive!*

In other words, God did the covering over...for you!

Affirmation from David



Romans
4:6-8

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The verbs, both in Hebrew and Greek, bring to mind the OT picture of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement; the blood applied to the “Mercy Seat”; and the sacrificial blood of Lev. 16!!!

Most Holy
Place

יהושע



λογίσται

Ark of the
Covenant

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Lastly, David speaks about the Lord not crediting or, better yet, not “*charging*” sin against a person (you)! Thus, your faith in God is credited for a declaration of righteousness...this is a **BLESSING!**



THE ACCOUNT OF ABRAHAM (PART I, Sect. 2)

Circumcision: Sign or Seal

**Next
Week**

ROMANS 4:9-12