

Faithful and Forgiven
Romans 4:1-8
Berean Baptist Church
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INTRODUCTION

Three times now (1:2, 3:21, 3:31) Paul has insisted that his Gospel is not really some new teaching, but an old one found at the foundation of the Old Testament. Here Paul proves that righteousness by faith has always been how God's people were saved. This passage powerfully shows how God counts faith for righteousness and chooses to not count the sins of those who trust Him.

“Count,” “reckon,” and “impute” is the key idea in this passage. It shows up five times (Vs 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8 each time Paul used the same word) describing God giving righteousness to someone, just as a generous person might give you money. Sometimes the Bible uses "count" to describe getting a new identity or value. In 2 Chr 9:20 (LXX) silver is "accounted" as not precious because there is so much of it, and in Romans 9:8 gentiles of faith are "counted" as descended of Abraham. So, "count," "reckon," and "impute" in this passage mean the giving of something to someone.

Justification by faith means that God gives the believer a new righteous identity in Christ, and God does not count the believer's sins. If you are in Christ God counts you righteous, and He will not count your sins against you in eternal judgment!

This passage shows us this truth through the lives of two very different men who were counted among the righteous by God's grace.

Abraham was “the friend of God,” (Jas 2:23) and David was a man after God's heart (Acts 13:22). Both were great men of faith. But they had very different lives that illuminated the wonderful depth of God's gift of righteousness by faith. From this passage, see how you, like Abraham, can receive God's righteousness and walk by faith! And how, like David, you can be forgiven according to God's promises.

Trust Jesus to save and guide you, and you'll be counted righteous! Seek Jesus' forgiveness and you'll be forgiven!

Abraham was raised as pagan but chose to leave everything he knew to follow God across the world. He struggled with sins but is still one of the brightest examples of a man who walked with God. David was raised to fear God and grew up with all the religious advantages. He was greatly used of the Lord but also fell into several dark sins that cost many lives.

Romans 4:1-6 The Faith of Abraham; Faith and Righteousness

Vs 1 "our father" and the discussion of “the flesh” indicates that Paul is speaking especially to Jewish believers. But what he says impacts all people. By the end of the chapter (vs 16-22), we will see that Abraham is not just father to the Hebrews but to all that call on the God of Abraham in faith.

Vs 1-2 To have the righteousness of God is to be equal with God in righteousness. Anyone who worked their way up to perfect holiness would have something to brag about to the rest of us, but not to God because He's already there!

What we trust in is our boast. If we trust in our works, then we must make them our boast. If we trust in

our God, then He becomes our boast. This is why Paul shows that no one can “rest in the law, and make thy boast of God... (Rom 2:17).” Someone who rests in the law makes their boast about themselves and their goodness. But those who live by the trust of faith make their boast about God.

Abraham and David (Gen 15 and Psl 51) had times where they acknowledged they were weak or wicked without God's help.

Be like Abraham and David by acknowledging that you come to God empty handed! And God will provide for you!

The life of Abraham is found in Genesis 12:1 through 25:8. It is worth your time to read (or listen to) those chapters of Genesis to better understand the life and faith of Abraham.

Vs 3 "Abraham believed God" This is about more than just one promise. Abraham believed in the character of God and he trusted God to keep specific promises. He may not have always understood how God was going to keep that promise but he knows the person who made the promise and trusts Him.

How could God “justify the ungodly” Abraham was the friend of God but also a sinner. How can a sinner find rest in the presence of a God who “will not justify the wicked (Exd 23:7)?”

“...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Rom 3:25-26).”

Justice was done on the cross when "...in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6)." And on the third day, He arose.

Vs 3 Abraham's trust in God's promise was "counted" (considered, calculated, accounted) as righteousness. Abraham was a sinner but he was also a man of faith, and so God was able to judge Abraham as though he were sinless.

Vs 4-5 A man who always did acted rightly would be "owed" the debt of righteousness by God, just like a laborer is owed his wages. And a man who inherited righteousness because of his genealogy or background would also be "owed" the debt of Righteousness.

But Abraham was declared righteous without regard to his works and only after he walked away from his background, the household of his father, and the gods of his family.

Abraham was physically rich but felt as though he had nothing (Gen 15:3), even so, he believed God. And God became his shield and exceedingly great reward:

“...the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Gen 15:1).”

Even as Christ IS our righteousness and redemption

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and

sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Cor 1:30-31).”

Acknowledge that your hands are empty, except God's free gift, and thank Him for it!

God gives liberally and freely. He gives more generously than you can imagine! And the Scriptures use financial language and business terms to describe God's generosity.

God freely gave Abraham righteousness because Abraham trusted Him. Abraham's mighty life of faith may look intimidating to us, but it is something you can share if you will only trust the promises and person of God.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Rom 10:9).

Have the faith like Abraham by believing that God raised Jesus from the dead and following Him as Lord, and you will be numbered among the righteous!

Once you make this decision to trust as Abraham did, you must walk by that same faith. Turn to the life of Abraham for guidance on what it means to walk by faith.

Follow God when He gives you a hard calling; God called Abraham from home, family, and country. Abraham followed and was rewarded.

Believe the promises of God even when they seem ridiculous; God promised Abraham a son when he was 99, but Abraham believed and his 90-year-old wife bore him that son.

Trust God even in the face of death; Abraham concluded in his heart that God could raise Issac from the dead and so he was rewarded.

Romans 4:6-8 The Faith of David; Faith and Forgiveness

Paul's audience would have been deeply familiar with the life of David as they were the life of Abraham. David's story is told in the books of Samuel, he was a great man of faith but he sinned much more grievously than Abraham and here the Scriptures focus on the forgiveness that sustained David.

As Genesis 15:6 powerfully summarizes the salvation of Abraham, 2 Samuel 23:5 David's secure hope in God's mercy. In David's last public address he declares the importance of righteousness but confesses... Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

All of David's hope and salvation rests on God's promises. This is the faith of David, the faith of a man who sinned terribly but knows the forgiveness of a God who does not count his sins against him.

Vs 6 “imputeth righteousness” means to give righteousness to and also to count among righteousness.

Vs 7-8 This is a quotation from Psalm 38. David personally knew the blessedness of being forgiven. And he knew what it was to have God not count your sin.

David's sins were grievous and inexcusable. People died because of David's sins on more than one occasion. But David knew by faith that God's promises are greater than his sins.

If you will believe Jesus, trust His promise, and seek His forgiveness, then you will have the faith of David and the forgiveness of your sins!

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt 26:28).”

Have faith like David by seeking God's forgiveness in Jesus' name!

Once you receive forgiveness as David did, let this mercy drive your life.

Rejoice in the Lord using your God-given gifts to praise Him and celebrate His love. David tuned his gift for music to sing the praise of his God.

Be open about your failures and use them as an opportunity to tell others about your trust in God's mercy. David sinned many times, but each time he acknowledged his sin and flung himself on the mercy of God.

CONCLUSION

Salvation has always come by faith through grace because we are unable to work our way to heaven. No one is able! Not even Abraham or David! We can have their faith by believing God's promises and seeking his forgiveness. These men were not perfect, they were normal flawed people, like you and I. But by faith, they were counted righteous. This is where it must start.

Receive God's righteousness and seek His forgiveness by faith in Jesus!

Once we believe God's promises and trust His forgiveness in Christ, He will equip us to follow the steps of the faith like Abraham and David.

Like Abraham, follow God, believe His promises, and know that Jesus overcomes death.

Like David, ask God to forgive you when you sin, let that forgiveness fuel your love, and tell others of His mercy!

Trust Jesus to save and guide you, and you'll be counted righteous! Seek Jesus' forgiveness and you'll be forgiven!