**Lesson 9: The Father of All Who Believe**

Text: Romans 4:1-12

**Introduction**

In Romans 3:21-31, Paul made it clear that righteousness is a gift of God. It cannot be earned. It can only be received. Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross provides the means by which God is just and the justifier of all who will simply believe. Are there any examples in the Old Testament that might prove this point? The Jews would naturally analyze Paul’s statements in light of their history. Their first consideration would be their highly revered ancestor, Abraham. They believed that he was right with God because of his works. Most Jews would be surprised to see that Paul called Abraham as a witness of justification by faith alone. He is the father of all who believe…not just the Jews!

1. **Abraham was justified by faith alone. (v. 1-5)**
   1. To prove that justification by faith established the law (3:31), Paul demonstrated this truth in the life of Abraham. (v. 1)
   2. If justification came by works, Abraham had room to boast. (v. 2a) From the Jewish perspective, Abraham was an example of obedience to God. They presented him in a strictly favorable light. Compared to other Jews, Abraham shined as an example of good works. They were overlooking some obvious flaws in his character.
   3. Paul said that he had no room to boast before God. (v. 2b) The boasting of man is ruled out in the presence of God. We tend to compare ourselves to those who seem to be doing worse than us. Have you compared your righteousness to God’s? If so, your boasting has come to a quick end.
   4. Rather than human opinion, Paul drew his conclusion from God’s Word. (v. 3)
      1. He quoted Genesis 15:6 as evidence that Abraham was justified by faith. This is the first time that the word “believe” is used in the Bible. It is significant that it is used in reference to justification by faith.
      2. Another important word in the text is the word “counted.” It is an economic term meaning to “credittosomeone's account” (Friberg). It is used 11 times in this chapter! It is translated “count” in verses 3, 5; “reckon” in verses 4, 9-10; and “impute” in verses 6, 8, 11, 22-24.
      3. In reference to Abraham, he was given a righteousness that did not originate with him. He had simply believed and God put righteousness on his account.
   5. The stress of the verse is on the fact that he was justified apart from works. (v. 4)
      1. If a person works a job, he or she receives compensation. Wages are reckoned based on that which is owed. The employer is obligated to pay the employee. This clearly does not apply to man’s situation before God.
      2. To say that man can earn righteousness is to say that God is obligated to man. This could never be! God owes us nothing.
   6. According to the record of God’s Word, a person is justified by faith alone. (v. 5) The Jews would struggle with two statements in this verse:
      1. They would struggle with the thought that a righteous standing before God was NOT tied to their good works. Their whole life was consumed with keeping the law! “We naturally think justification ought to go to the good, those who are trying to do their best.” (R. Kent Hughes)
      2. They would also struggle with the concept that God justifies the ungodly. How could He do this and remain just? Anticipating their struggle, Paul presented additional evidence.
2. **David is presented as another example of one who was justified by faith alone. (v. 6-8)** 
   1. The Jews had high regard for King David.
   2. These verses are a quotation of Psalm 32:1-2 which David wrote after his sin with Bathsheba. This is significant because he could not have merited God’s favor at this point in his life.
   3. David described the blessed state of the person unto whom God imputes (credits) righteousness without works. (v. 6)
   4. The repentant sinner is blessed because God doesn’t hold his sin against him! (v. 7)
      1. “It is not the ‘reckoning’ of people’s good works, but God’s act in not reckoning their sins against them that constitutes forgiveness.” (Douglas Moo).
      2. “Those who have put their faith in God are completely forgiven of their sin. Nothing can be brought up for which provision has not already been made.” (Robert Mounce).
   5. Forgiveness means that God does not keep your sins on your account! (v. 8) Instead of being condemned, we stand acquitted. We are free to have a relationship with God.
   6. Who is able to enjoy such a blessed and happy state before God?
      1. Are the Jews the only recipients of this blessed standing before God? (v. 9)
      2. The self-righteous Jews assumed it was strictly available to those who were circumcised. Circumcision was a sign that they were in a covenant with God.
      3. They would be shocked to hear that the uncircumcised Gentiles could be in a right relationship with God.
      4. They would be even more flabbergasted that Paul returned to the example of Abraham for proof!
3. **All people are justified by faith alone. (v. 10-12)** 
   1. Abraham was declared righteous while he was yet uncircumcised. (v. 10)
   2. Circumcision came later as a sign. (v. 11a; Genesis 17:24)
      1. Circumcision was not given to make Abraham right with God, but as an indication (a sign and seal) that he was right with God.
      2. Thus, circumcision did not add anything to Abraham’s standing before God.
   3. If Abraham could be declared righteous while yet uncircumcised, so could the Gentiles.
   4. Abraham is the father of all that believe! (v. 11b-12)
      1. He is the father of believing Gentiles. (v. 11b)
      2. He is the father of the believing Jews. (v. 12) There is a distinction here between the Jews who count on their works and Jewish heritage (v. 12a; John 8:33-44) and those who have followed the example of Abraham in simple faith (v. 12b).
4. **Central Idea: Paul used the examples of Abraham and David to demonstrate that a person is justified by faith alone.**
5. **Application: You must simply believe to receive righteousness, because justification is by faith alone.** 
   1. You could never do enough to earn a righteous standing before God. Many think that they will make it to heaven if they do their very best. They count on baptism, church attendance, good deeds, and their religious heritage as their way to be right with God. God doesn’t count these for righteousness.
   2. Salvation is not a mixture of your good works and God’s grace. You can only be justified by faith alone.
   3. Trust that which God did for your salvation rather than what you do. Rest in the fact of forgiveness.

**Conclusion**

This is liberating truth! When you trust Christ for salvation, you are no longer condemned. Your sin debt has been paid. The righteousness of Jesus Christ has been credited to your account. You do not have to perform to earn God’s love and approval. You do not have to wait to see if you will make it to heaven. You can joyfully serve the Lord knowing that you are heaven bound! You are free to follow in the steps of Abraham, the father of all who believe.