

## Romans 4.1-25

## Impressive References!

Last wk LUNCH with Some BICF Pastors > asked Bing Shway ICE WATER  
Got CONCERNED Response from Waiter: Not Safe to have ICE in Virus Time

We all got MUGS of BOILING HOT Water!

Another Pastor arrived Later w/in Minutes SERVED Big Glass Ice Water LIME  
We all Laughed – Blessed Fellow American Pastor – he/wife Regulars – Normal  
Begged our Friend – Tell Waiter we’re Your Friends – got Ice Waters/Lime too!  
Life is OFTEN about WHO you KNOW – Need some Impressive References!

Romans 3 Ended w/ Series of Questions > Relation btwn Paul’s Gospel & LAW  
Paul/Prosecuting Attorney > Set Forth case World GUILTY / God GRACIOUS  
CLIMAX: Audacious CLAIM – Only Savior from Sin / Only Hope for World

Beaten, Broken, Naked MAN NAILED to Cross Outside Jerusalem

He ALONE offers Justification, Redemption, Propitiation thru FAITH in Him

NOW that Church in Rome – whole CITY of Rome – Asks OBVIOUS Question  
WHO believes THIS? What do the EXPERTS say? Who are your References?

Paul/Prosecutor calls 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Witnesses: PROVE> Salvation by Grace thru Faith

Ch. 4 – APOSTLE Calls to the Stand 2 IMPRESSIVE REFERENCES

Israel’s Greatest Patriarch / AND Israel’s Greatest King

follows Same Strategy MATTHEW as wrote GOSPEL to Jewish Audience

“genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” Matthew 1.1

### 1. Justification is by Faith, not Works 1-8

#### a. Nature of Faith

v. 1 QUESTION – Bkgd > How does argument of chs 1-3 relate to Jewish faith?  
Church comprised of GENTILES & JEWS now Recently Allowed to RETURN

Rom 4 > Paul assumes Readers are Familiar with these 3 Promises given to Abe

1. Elderly childless couple promised a Son > Give Birth to Nation of Israel
2. Promise of Homeland /Canaan: Rest of Bible – struggle to obtain & keep
3. Promise of Global Blessing – “all peoples will be blessed thru you”

### SON – HOMELAND – GLOBAL BLESSING

ABRAHAM CONSIDERED - Father of Israel’s Faith / Isaiah preached to Judah

“Look to the rock from which you were cut...look to Abraham, your father”

Isaiah 51.1,2

v. 1 “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?”

Paul answers Own Question – with Wrong Answer and a Right Answer

WRONG ANSWER v. 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Began with WRONG ANSWER WAS POPULAR ANSWER – Then and Now

ABE - Esteemed Highly by Jewish Rabbis > Believed he was saved by his works

“Abraham was perfect in all his dealings with the Lord and gained favor by his righteousness throughout his life.”

Jewish Apocrypha

Common EVANGELICAL Misunderstanding – Abe has NO Righteousness

BUT God wanted to Save Him – and LOOKED for Something to Reward

GOD SAW ABE’S FAITH & Accepted this Faith IN PLACE OF Righteousness

Faith is NOT ALTERNATIVE to Righteousness / but Means of RECEIVING IT

“God is not a juggler of truth...If God counted Abraham righteous, it must have been on the basis of a true righteousness – his own or someone else’s”

James Boice

Only Salvation in ENTIRE Bible is thru Jesus Christ

OT Believer – Looked Forward in Faith to PROMISE of a Coming Savior

NT Believer – Looks Back in Faith to Fulfilled Promises – Savior has COME

Buy something with 100 RMB note > Need faith in Note's Purchasing Power  
 BUT SHOPKEEPER makes Purchase on Power of Note – Not your Faith in It  
 PURCHASE VALUE is in the MONEY – NOT the GIVER of the MONEY

v. 2 “he has something to boast about, but not before God” SARCASM

WORLD BOASTS of GREAT PEOPLE, Charitable Donors, Influential Leaders

WORLD – Make statue of him, hang his portrait, found his denomination

GOD MADE ENOUGH BEAUTIFUL PEACOCKS TO DECORATE EARTH

He does not expect us to strut around Heaven with our Feathers in Fan

YOU MAY BOAST or be boasted about ON Earth – But NOT BEFORE GOD

RIGHT v. 3 " For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

SALVATION by Works has NEVER been God's plan for Anyone after ADAM

b. Message of Faith v. 3 “For what does the Scripture say?”

“Scripture” Singular / Bible > UNIFIED Body of Inspired Writings – CANON

PERSONIFICATION “What does the Scripture say?”

No DISTINCTION between THIS BOOK and VOICE OF GOD HIMSELF

PRESENT Tense “What does it say?” NOT SAID > Living Word of Living God

ASKING QUESTION > Scripture gives Authoritative Guidance / Final Appeal

INTERESTING TO STUDY PAUL'S USE OF SCRIPTURE

FIRST CHRISTIAN SERMON > preached by Peter on Pentecost in Jerusalem

METHOD of Using Scripture – Different than Paul

PETER – Quote OT text then Explain and Apply It > in Acts 2 {3 OT texts}

PAUL – Makes connection with Readers by Reason and Relevant Examples

THEN Paul PROVES what he has Taught BY Hebrew Scriptures > Ex. Romans

c. Blessing of Faith v. 3 “it was counted to him as righteousness”

Counted/Credited: Bookkeeping Term – Used by Accountants > Exact Accuracy

ARE YOU TIRED of walking around with only 100 tenge in your pocket??

NO Problem: Get your accounting bk– ADD 0’s to 100, 1000, 10,000, 100,000

THEN You’ll HAVE LOTS MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET – Right!!

WRONG! Cannot CREDIT what ain’t got to CREDIT/ No Money, No Funny!

GOD SAVED ABRAHAM – He did 2 things - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

POSITIVE side of Justification > God give us more 0’s from Jesus

vs. 4,5 “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness”

RIGHTEOUSNESS of Christ is COUNTED to our ACCOUNT / 8 X’s in chapt

“Jesus told the Jews “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”  
John 8.56

Theological Term “IMPUTATION” of Christ’s Righteousness / Legally Applied

NEGATIVE – quote from Israel’s Greatest King and Poet > DAVID

NEED v. 15 “law brings wrath” / BROKEN LAW DEMAND PENALTY

ANTICIPATED BY PROMISES > Shocking when it Occurs / Shocking VERSE

v. 5 “And to the one who does not work but believes in him who *justifies the ungodly*”

Appears to CONTRADICT Standards of OT – Justifies Ungodly/ Wicked!?

Israel's Judges were WARNED AGAINST THIS > Perversion of Justice

Have nothing to do with a false charge...for I will not acquit the guilty

Exodus 23.7

“He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.”

Proverbs 17.15

HOW can Paul EXALT IN what God says he will Never Do? – Pervert Justice

GOD DID NOT PERVERT JUSTICE – HE SATISFIED IT COMPLETELY

God CAN Justify the Wicked / because He Satisfied Justice on their Behalf

v. 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

vs. 7,8 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

Paul turns Psalm because Rabbinical Principle of Interpretation

“when the same word is used in two Biblical passages, each can be used to interpret the other”

Genesis 15.6 & Psalm 32.2 both contain word for COUNT or CREDIT

David > Unmerited Righteousness Credited to him Because of Faith!

OT Sacrificial System > No Provision for David's Premeditated Sin

Took Man's Wife – Lied to Commanders – Ordered Murder of Husband

David was Hopeless: Nothing he could do but Cast Himself on God's Mercy

Why David could ONLY cry in REPENTANCE for MERCY and GRACE

“For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Psalm 51.16,17

“If we examine the remainder of the psalm to discover the ground on which he was acquitted, it appears that he simply acknowledged his guilt and cast himself in faith upon the mercy of God.”  
F. F. Bruce

Nothing you and I can ever do can atone for our sins. Our only hope is

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe”  
Romans 3.21,22

1<sup>st</sup> Trip UGANDA 40 yrs ago – 1980 – Single, Sem Student, 2 Profs, 8 Students

1<sup>st</sup> Day walk by Myself @ Kampala > followed Crowds to OWINO Market

Lots of Friendly SMILES – Not many MY TRIBE – Idi Amin just chased by TZ

Big Market > Crowd around Man with SNAKE > Selling Home-Made Medicine

SAFE from SNAKE Bites if BUY Some of Medicine Snake Handler Selling

When I walked Up – People shouted MUZUNGU, Stopped, Looked at Stranger!

Nice Ugandan man Next to Me > Translating from LUGANDA –

‘the man wants to sell you some medicine because snakes will bite you’!!

Asked Man if Translate > Preached Sermon John 3 – Serpent Lifted Wilderness,

Looked and Saved – So if they LOOK to Jesus the Son of Man can be SAVED!

Afterwards asked my Translator if HE was SAVED? “No, I can never be saved”

Told me SHOCKING Story being in one of AMIN’S Prisons

One Day handed him HAMMER told to Kill his CELL MATE – Refused

Then tried Taking Hammer from Him to give to Cell Mate to Kill HIM!

So my New Friend GRABBED Hammer Quickly & KILLED his Cell Mate first

Told him about God’s Mercy for Murders > Moses, David, Paul, my Own Father

GOD TOOK OUR SINS OUT OF HIS ACCOUNTING BOOK / How?

BY TRANSFERING OUR DEBT to the CREDIT SHEET of HIS SON

JESUS PAID THE PRICE / MET LAW’S DEMAND / DEBT IS COVERED

When GOD says He WILL NOT COUNT Our Sin it is GONE Forever

vs. 7,8 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

## 2. Justification is by Grace, not Law, vs. 9-17

a. God's Initiative in Grace – Rabbi's believed Abe Credited his own Account

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING TODAY – Bible = BOOK OF HEROES

God Sees GOOD PEOPLE and Blesses them FOR THEIR GOODNESS

ABE was SO GOOD that he DESERVES GOD'S BLESSING

“Amazing Grace” is our favorite hymn, but most people think that if you just do your best you will somehow make it to Heaven. Kent Hughes

In story of Abe GIFT OF SALVATION Came BEFORE his OBEDIENCE

OBEYED as Grateful Response to Salvation to as Ground or Reason for It

vs. 10,11 “How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.”

Abraham's JUSTIFICATION recorded in Genesis 15 – about 14 years later

Abraham's CIRCUMCISION recorded in Genesis 17 – Sign of Covenant Faith

SAME THING SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT CHRISTIAN BAPTISM TODAY

b. God's Insurance in Grace – Grace comes with God's Guarantee

v. 11 CIRCUMCISION was Sign and Seal of Salvation > not Substance of It

SIGN to IDENTIFY them / SEAL to AUTHENTICATE Them

SIGN: Visible object that points to something different from & greater than itself

ROAD SIGN – 10 km to Beijing – Sign not Beijing – POINTS TO Beijing

THEREFORE IT IS NOT WITHOUT VALUE

HOTEL SIGN – B.U.P.T. – Identifies – PLUS Signifies Ownership

SEAL – well understood in this country – everything must carry a stamp  
 Stamp bears the SEAL – Authority of the organization Standing Behind It  
 GOD STAND BEHINDS HIS SACRAMENT – Seal of His Righteousness  
 When MARTIN LUTHER became discouraged during Protestant Reformation  
 Great Strain of Leading a Movement and Enduring Criticism and Adversity  
 He would write in chalk on the Table – Latin words for “I have been baptized”  
 FOUND STRENGTH REMEMBERING IDENTIFICATION with the  
 Death and Resurrection of Christ – basis of Hope and Salvation

NOT THROUGH LAW – vs. 13-15 “For the promise to Abraham and his  
 offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but  
 through the righteousness of faith. For if it is the adherents of the law who are to  
 be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but  
 where there is no law there is no transgression.”

TWO STARK CONTRASTS – Either we Gain our own Righteousness  
 or we are GIVEN SOMEONE ELSE’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

LAW and GRACE are both Gifts from God / Both are Important  
 BUT THEY CANNOT BE IN OPERATION AT THE SAME TIME  
 EITHER ANDROID or APPLE – Choose ONE Operating System  
 In Law – God says “You must” / In Grace – God says “I will”

TO LIVE BY LAW IS TO LIVE IN DOUBT – Never Can be Sure  
 Has your effort been good enough? Are you sure? Do you need to do more?

v. 16 “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on  
 grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring”

“Law is man directed (it points to human abilities) while faith is God-directed (it  
 points to God’s accomplishments). So, if you are approaching salvation by  
 trusting man, you cannot be trusting God” James Boice



### c. God's Inclusion in Grace Law & Ceremony divides / ONLY Christ Unites

v. 9 “Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised?”

vs. 11,12 “He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

v. 16 “who is the father of us all” / UNITY of All the People of GOD in JESUS  
 JEWS – Realize Gospel of Jesus fulfills Promises of the Hebrew Scripture  
 GENTILES – Recipients of Ancient Spiritual Heritage thru Messiah of Israel

“If God is your Father, and He is now my Father – then we have become Brothers” Indian Chief who became New Believer told Missionary

v. 13 “promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be *heir of the world*”  
 GENESIS 12 – Promise first given – Small piece of Real Estate called Canaan

NOW IN CHRIST – Global, Messianic Fulfillment

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Matthew 5.5  
 GOD'S PURPOSE is for ALL NATIONS – Israel AND Palestine  
 From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe...“that all may hear and believe”

### 3. Justification is by Resurrection Power: Not Human Effort

a. Comfort in God's Promise – Promises were not Fulfilled Immediately

Abe called Man of Faith – Long, often Lonely, Walk of Faith

ABRAM – “Great or Exalted Father” – how many kids? NONE?! Great Fool!

ABRAHAM – now one son – “Father of a Multitude”- Certifiably Crazy Now  
 EVERYTHING IN EXPERIENCE FLIES IN FACE OF GOD’S PROMISES

vs. 18,19 “In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.”

NOT ESCAPE from Reality > Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact  
 Behind Promise is Character of Promise Maker > Abe walked, Confidence Grew  
 Faith looks at Problems in the light of God’s Promises > God is Worthy of Trust

b. Confidence in God’s Power God who Promised is ABLE, Willing & Able

vs. 20-22 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”

Out of this Couple’s DOUBLE DEATH God brought New Life  
 Birth of Isaac was BOTH an Act of Creation AND Resurrection

“There are degrees of faith, from weak to strong. How then does (faith) grow? Above all through the use of our minds. Faith is not burying our heads in the sand, screwing ourselves up to believe what we know is not true, or even whistling in the dark to keep our spirits up. On the contrary faith is reasoning trust. There can be no believing without thinking. On the one hand we need to think about the problems that face us. But on the other hand, Abraham reflected on the promises of God and character of the God who made them...And as his mind played on the promises, the problems shrank accordingly.” John Stott

c. Certainty of God’s Plan – Paul jumps 2000 yrs forward from Abe to Jesus

vs. 23,24 But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord

WE have STRONGER CERTAINTY – Birth of Isaac AND the Empty Tomb!

AS PETER SAYS “we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it”  
2 Peter 1.19

BRIEF AND POWERFUL SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE GOSPEL  
v. 25 “who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification”

“In this verse the whole of Christianity is understood...we sinned therefore he suffered, we were justified because he rose”  
Martin Luther

“He was delivered up to atone for our sins,  
and was raised that we might be justified”

“The resurrection is the proclamation of the fact that God is fully and completely satisfied with the work that his Son did on the cross”  
Martyn Lloyd-Jones

ABE’S Testimony from 4000 yrs ago Speaks POWERFULLY to 21<sup>st</sup> C Society  
We have IMPRESSIVE REFERENCES of ALL the Heroes of the BIBLE  
With Exception of ONE – Great Heroes, Great Sinners >>> Great SAVIOR  
NOW in the Risen Christ – We have Word of Prophets made More CERTAIN

Need a CERTAIN Hope in TIME of DEATH AND NOTHINGNESS

Nothingness and Death – ARE NO PROBLEM FOR GOD

OUT OF NOTHING – God created the Universe

FROM THE DEAD – God raised the Lord Jesus Christ

“Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. You show steadfast love to thousands...O great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts”  
Jeremiah 32.17,18

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Romans 4.<sup>1</sup>What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup>And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, <sup>6</sup>just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered;

<sup>8</sup>blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

<sup>9</sup>Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. <sup>10</sup>How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. <sup>11</sup>He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, <sup>12</sup>and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

<sup>13</sup>For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

<sup>16</sup>That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. <sup>18</sup>In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>19</sup>He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. <sup>20</sup>No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>That is why his faith

was “counted to him as righteousness.”<sup>23</sup> But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,<sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,<sup>25</sup> who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.