

Parson to Person

ROMANS 4 PART 3

“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.’ Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations’) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’

Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:1–25 NKJV).

When we talk about justification by faith, and give focus to the word “justification” through the definition, “just-if-I’d” never sinned, we tend to think that God forgives our sins but remembers them nonetheless. In doing this, we get the Gospel wrong! God did say, *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”* (Hebrews 10:17 NKJV). This blessing and promise is part of the New Covenant promised to Israel and enjoyed by all the people of *(the)* faith.

Paul, when reciting David, gave special attention to this when he wrote, *“blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”* (vs. 8). Of interest is also the hidden gem here recorded in chapter 4.

Last week I mentioned that, “Abraham was called by God at the age of 75 (Genesis 12:1–4). At that time, God began to communicate His promise to him. Closely thereafter, Abraham and Sarah journeyed to Canaan for a brief period. Then, as the result of famine in the land of Canaan, they sojourned to Egypt for the space of about 10 years. Following their return, God once again confirmed His promise to Abraham (Genesis 13:14–16 and 15:1–7) by an unconditional, one-sided covenant. Shortly thereafter, Sarah encouraged Abraham to take her handmaiden (Hagar) in order to help fulfill the promises of God. This was a big mistake. The result was the birth of a son (by Hagar) named Ishmael. However, God had promised Abraham *and Sarah* a son—a son of promise. Nonetheless, Abraham (through the flesh)

attempted to assist God in the fulfillment of that promise. This, among other things, was what Abraham learned *'according to the flesh'*—that God did not need his help and that the promises and blessings of God would come through faith—not by works.” However, here in chapter 4 Paul makes no mention of Abraham’s shortcomings. He simply recalls the history by saying, he, *“not being weak in faith...did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God...and therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness’”* (vss. 19–22).

Paul provided no mention of Abraham’s lapses—and there were many. Abraham lied about his wife, required his wife to lie. He demonstrated a lapse in faith when allowing his wife to lead him toward trust in the flesh (with Hagar), and when doing as she suggested. Abraham clearly was not one who lived in “unwavering faith.” However, the way the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to recall the history “remembers” it like this: *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith”* (vs. 20). Praise the Lord!

My friends, the same is true for you and me. History can faithfully tell the story of our lives and of all our shortcomings. However, God remembers our sin no more. *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin”* (vss. 7–8).

I love you all, Pastor Paul