

Study 4

All About Abraham Romans 4

Review

Paul has just made the incredible claim that Jews and Gentiles alike are put right with God in exactly the same way! "Is God the God of the Jews only?" asks Paul. "Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised through that same faith." (3:27-29)

In other words, doesn't matter if you're a blue blooded Jew - the Gentile up the road stands before God on exactly the same footing as you do! For the Jews, this is a staggering thought, and one they can't easily swallow.

In chapter 4, Paul takes them back to square one - back to Abraham, the great forefather of the people of Israel. Paul's reasoning in the chapter may seem complicated, but in the end it's not - he makes the simple point over and over again that Abraham wasn't put right with God by any of the things the Jews consider important. Rather, he was justified by faith, just as we are.

FIRST THINGS FIRST..

Let's take a quick look at what the Old Testament says about Abraham before we get started.

- First, read through Genesis 12:1-3 to review God's great promises to Abraham. Abraham was singled out to become the forefather of a great nation, through which God would one day pour out his blessing on all the world.
- Abraham has a dramatic encounter with God in Genesis 15:1-6. Read it - notice especially verse 6, which is one of the KEY VERSES in the bible. Write it out here...
- How was Abraham counted as right with God?
- Look over to Genesis 17. What happens here? Does anything that happens in this chapter make Abraham any more or less right with God than he was?
- Turn over to Exodus 20. These events are happening many years after the time of Abraham. What is God doing in this chapter?
- Notice verse 2. What has God done for the people of Israel BEFORE he gives them these commands?
- Where does Abraham fit in with all this? Was he right with God anyway?

NOW READ ROMANS 4

Righteousness is...

a) A Gift, not a WAGE! (v4-9)

1. What's the big difference between a gift and a wage?
2. Did Abraham WORK for his righteousness?
3. What does it mean that "God justifies the wicked"? (v5) How do you feel about this?

b) Not by Circumcision! (v9-12)

4. Now for the crunch. The Jews are put off by the fact that the "uncircumcised" can be justified like this. But what does the example of Abraham tell them? (Look back to the first part of the study if you're not sure!)
5. What is the MOST important thing about Abraham's example? In other words, what should we be imitating about him?
6. Can any religious ritual (like circumcision, baptism, the Lord's Supper etc) make any difference to our standing with God?

c) Not by Law! (v13-16)

7. If the Jews thought you get right with God by keeping the law, they've got it wrong! How does Abraham prove this point?
8. What did Abraham rely on rather than the law? (Think back to Genesis 12:1-3)

d) But BY FAITH (v16-22)

9. Faith is the only right response to a promise from God. Think about it. If someone makes you a promise, what are the two ways you can respond?
10. Although the Jews claimed Abraham as "their father", how does Paul draw the Jews and Gentiles together at this point? Who are the true "children of Abraham?"
11. Read through verses 17 to 21. List things you think are significant about Abraham's FAITH. (ie, who was it in? What did he believe?)

12. Abraham believed that God could "give life from the dead." How was this fact relevant to his experience?

How is this fact relevant in OUR EXPERIENCE?

Compare this with verse 24 and 25.

13. *"Faith is not simply a blind belief - it's a clear trust in the promises of God, an unshakeable conviction that God will stand by his word."* Do you agree? Which verses back up this statement?

e) What about YOU?

14. Abraham is not just an "academic case study" with no relevance to the real world. Read verses 23 to 25. What must WE do if we want to be "credited with righteousness"?