

Handout for Romans Chapter 4

In Romans chapter 4 Paul will use father Abraham, a model of righteousness to the Jews, to demonstrate that Abraham's righteousness was not through nature or through the Law of Moses but first through the righteousness of faith. As a result of the righteousness of Abraham's faith, his righteousness will be manifested through his deeds. Paul does by developing two themes:

1. Paul has to show that sacred Scripture identifies Abraham first and foremost as a person of faith (see Rom 4:1-12), and
2. Paul must demonstrate that it was upon the standing of Abraham's initial justification by faith that he received for himself and for his descendants the blessings of the Covenant promises that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:13-17).

In Romans 4:1-12 Paul presents his argument in 3 stages:

1. Romans 4:3-5 focuses on Genesis 15 (quoting verse 6)
2. Romans 4:6-8 focuses on Psalms 32 (quoting verses 1-2) and King David's justification, and
3. Romans 4:9-12 focuses on Genesis 17 (quoting verse 10) and Abraham's righteousness which is not the result of circumcision because his faith **preceded** his circumcision.

Romans 4:13-17: Paul is presenting the alternative to disobedience to the Law which leads to transgression of the Law and God's wrathful judgment through God's promise of salvation in the gift of unmerited grace and faith.

The Law → transgression → wrath	God's promises → unmerited grace → faith
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God's power to make us godly is greater than the power of concupiscence which tempts us to sin. [See CCC#405; 1264; 2515-16].

Scripture clearly teaches that Abraham was justified at least on 3 separate occasions:

1. Genesis 12: when Abraham obeyed God and left his homeland for the Promised Land
 2. Genesis 15: when Abraham believed the promise of descendants
 3. Genesis 22: when Abraham offered the "son of promise" on the altar to God
- Each of the 3 promises and Abraham's subsequent "justification" follows the 3-fold Abrahamic Covenant

Some Scripture passages that identify justification as a process:

Justification as a past event	Justification as a present event	Justification as a future event
Romans 5:1-2	James 2:24	Romans 2:13
Romans 5:9	Romans 3:28	Romans 3:20
1 Corinthians 6:11	Galatians 2:16, 17	Galatians 5:5

- The necessity of faith as the first step in the process of salvation: CCC# 161, *“Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation. Since ‘without faith it is impossible to please [God]’ and to attain to the fellowship of his Son, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life ‘but he who endures to the end.’”* [quoting Dei Filius 3; Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Hebrews 11:6; Council of Trent: DS 1532].
- The Council of Trent stated that this initial act of faith *“moves the person to recognize God, to repent of his sins, to put his trust and faith in God’s divine mercy and to love him above all things; and to desire the sacraments and resolve to live a holy life..”* *The Council of Trent, De Justification*, chapter 6.