

## Romans 4:1-13

I was fly fishing in Northern Idaho in one of the last unspoiled, crystal clear streams in the United States. Fly fishing is all about matching the current diet of the trout with an acceptable substitute. I was looking under little rocks trying to find the current trout menu. Each insect starts as an underwater bug hanging on the underside of rocks. I was looking for the current size and type of bug to imitate with my vast armada of exquisitely and personally tied flies. The problem was that in the bright sun in my face I could not really focus on each bug. Each little squirming larva seemed to be exactly the same. With each rock I turned over the greater the frustration.

Then in the corner of my eye there was a flash of reflected light. I waded a couple of feet and there at the bottom of the little creek was a pair of reading glasses. Probably lost by a fellow fisherman who probably was as blind as I.

I found my solution. The glass was intact and only scratched a little bit but they made all the difference.

Romans 4 starts the same way:

**Rom 4:1** What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

A few things today:

1. Abraham the founder of the Jewish nation was justified by faith.

Deeply embedded into the crystal spring of the Old Testament is the concept that was virtually ignored by Pharisaic Judaism. It is an understanding of a personal trust in God and this understanding is fundamental to the understanding of all other observances, rites, rituals, symbols, buildings, priestly utterances, sacrifices, Holy days, and even the temple. There has always been only one covenant of grace, and that men and women in both dispensations have been saved on the exactly same terms, by grace through faith.

*The "Works" crowd were proudly proclaiming, "Look at Abraham, there is a righteous man. He obeyed the law perfectly, even before it was given. He has something to boast about. It was his works that made him right with God."*

**Rom 4:4** Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due.

**Rom 4:5** But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is **reckoned** as righteousness,

**Rom 4:6** just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

Notice here "counted", "reckoned."

Here is a trap. We must avoid the notion that faith is a refined kind of righteousness which God accepts in lieu of Legal obedience. Faith is not depending upon nor relying on our belief. It is depending upon and relying on God.

Justification is a God job. Belief and faith are man's job.

To be justified is to be declared legally righteous. It is a divine act where God declares the sinner to be innocent of his sins. It is not that the sinner is now sinless but that he is "declared" sinless. The sinner is not made righteous in that his soul is changed or that his soul is infused with God's grace. Instead, justification is a legal act of imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer (Rom. 4:11, Phil. 3:9). This justification is based on the shed blood of Jesus, ". . . having now been justified by His blood . . ." (Rom. 5:9). When God sees the Christian, He sees him through the sacrifice of Jesus and "sees" him without sin. This declaration of innocence is not without cost, for it required the satisfaction of God's Law, ". . . without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness," (Heb. 9:22). By the sacrifice of Jesus and in the "one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men." (Rom. 5:18, NASB). In justification, the justice of God fell upon Himself--Jesus. We receive mercy. We are not judged according to our sins. And grace is shed upon us. We receive eternal life. This justification is a gift of grace (Rom. 3:24) and by faith (Rom. 3:28) because Jesus bore our guilt (Isaiah 53:12).

- a. What did Abraham find?
  - b. What was the result of Abraham's natural efforts to please God?
  - c. What did he find by his religious works?
  - d. What is included in the phrase, "according to the flesh?"
    - i. Whole natural man
    - ii. Body
    - iii. Soul
    - iv. Spirit
2. Abraham the founder of the Jewish nation was justified long before he was circumcised.

**Rom 4:7** "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

**Rom 4:8** "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

**Rom 4:9** Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

**Rom 4:10** How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

**Rom 4:11** and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them,

It is not an outward act that justified Abraham. It was not the act of circumcision. That happened later in his life.

3. But what can I "DO" to please God.
  - a. Everything
    - i. God desires your prayer
    - ii. God desires your efforts for the poor
    - iii. God desires your worship

- iv. God desires your attendance in Church
- v. God desires your obedience
  1. But these things you do are not counted as righteousness
  2. These things you do are not a requisite for entrance into heaven
  3. These things you do are not winning you favors
  4. These things you do are not making you any more holy
  5. These things you do are not making you any more righteous.
  6. These things are seen only as a personal response by a grateful being
- b. Nothing
  - i. What do we do with those who do not work at all? Verses 4 and 5

**Rom 4:4** Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due.

**Rom 4:5** But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is **reckoned** as righteousness,

- ii. When a man works his wages are not counted as a gift
  1. The gift is the price paid for justification
  2. The gift is the only measure of a man
- iii. When a man works to get himself into the good graces of God, he is saying, “ I don’t need the gift, I have earned the right.”
- iv. God does not make us godly and then justified.
  1. God’s spirit does not change our lives to a point we start doing and earning before we are justified
  2. God justifies, pardon is applied to the soul
  3. God justifies the ungodly
- v. Our own personal righteousness must be uprooted. It must be eliminated. Because without that elimination we will always say I deserved it.
  1. Baptism and Circumcision. Analogous
  2. Both have value as an offering to God in response to inward change.
  3. But neither have any worth outside of new creature.
- c. Abraham did not work at pleasing God
  - i. He believed in God
  - ii. He had faith in God
  - iii. He stood before God a sinner
    1. No wages to be paid
    2. No wages earned
    3. No prayer made
    4. No sacrifice
    5. Ungodly
      - a. Not depraved
      - b. Without acceptable piety
  - iv. “Make me a promise” said God “to obey and follow”
    1. OK I can do that.

It is the fundamental and guiding principle in obtaining God’s favor, Faith.