

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"Abraham's Faith"

Romans 4:1-3

March 24, 1985

INTRODUCTION

1. The truths presented in the closing paragraph of the previous chapter are now given some living proofs.
2. There (3:21-31), righteousness through faith is witnessed by the law and the prophets (v. 21). All human boasting is excluded (v. 27). While righteousness is apart from the law, it nonetheless establishes the law (v. 31).
3. Moses and Paul are in full accord. Righteousness through faith is demonstrated in living flesh. There are four major points in this chapter: 1) Both Abraham (vv. 1-5) and David (vv. 6-8) were justified through faith. 2) Abraham was justified before circumcision (vv. 9-12). 3) God's promise to Abraham was through faith (vv. 13-17a). 4) The faith to be exercised to the Gospel is the same as that of Abraham (vv. 17b-25).
4. So, to the Word. What about Abraham? The record is clear as crystal. Study it:-

1. QUESTION v. 1

a. About Abraham

This is just like saying, "what advantage has a Jew?" They had the O.T. They had a national history. They enjoyed God's providence. They had remarkable religious prominence. Abraham is one of the "fathers" (cf. 9:5). Does he give any clue as to the veracity of the truth just presented (3:21-21)?

b. About flesh

Natural descent is not the real issue, though it must be implied. Contextually the thought is this: What did Abraham find according to the flesh i.e. through his own natural efforts as distinct from the grace of God? It is equivalent to: "What did Abraham gain by works?" The obvious answer is "nothing!"

2. EXPLANATION v. 2.

a. About justification

The "for" is really not the answer to the question (v. 1), but the reason for asking it. All the Jews believed Abraham was justified, but how? By what means? It could not be by works, for then he could glory (boast). Yes, he was justified, but in such a way as to exclude boasting.

b. About God

The phrase "but not before God" is critical. It shows that Abraham had no ground of glorying toward God and therefore was not justified by works. Abraham's

works were spoken, but Scripture flatly declares he was justified. It had to be by sovereign grace through faith.

3. QUOTATION v. 3.

a. Scripture

The word "Scriptures" is the Latin for "writings." It comes down to us in the word "script." It means the writings were the word of God. Paul's appeal, therefore, is not to experience, but to Scripture. That was final. There is no room for discussion. Here is the Supreme court of God.

b. Statement

It is recorded simply: "Abraham believed God." What a marvelous record. Some men in Scripture were famous for their position before God, but whose faith is not mentioned (cf. King Saul). For Abraham, Scripture is definite--he believed God (Gen. 15:6). In view of progressive revelation, what Abraham believed is not the same content as what we believe, but the fact remains what he did was believe the Word of God. That is the essential factor in Paul's argument.

c. Support

The verb "counted" involves a bookkeeping transaction on the part of God. Whether God Himself does this or a recording angel is not the issue. The fact is--records are kept before God. The Greek verb employed here is used 41 times in the N.T., 35 times by Paul (19 in Romans and 11 in this fourth chapter). Succinctly, it means to reckon, count, calculate, compute, count over. It means that for the believer, God has made a precise mathematical calculation and with care placed the deposit of His own righteousness to His credit in God's Book. It is a finished transaction forever. That's what happened for Abraham. It can happen for you, if you believe in the vicarious atonement which God provided for you in Christ Jesus.

NOTE: Justification is: 1. An expression of His Sovereignty (Rom. 8:33). 2. Freely provided (Rom. 3:24). 3. Accomplished by blood (Rom. 5:9). 4. By Christ's obedience (Rom. 5:19). 5. By the resurrection (Rom. 4:25). 6. By the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11). 7. By faith on Christ (Gal. 2:16). 8. Evidenced by works (James 2:24).

CONCLUSION The religious world fights the God of grace and faith. But, there is no other way to be justified before God.

*The God of Abraham praise
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days, and God of love.*