

# ***Table of Contents***

## ***For Romans 4***

*READ THE APPROPRIATE CHAPTER Page 70*

*READ AND DISCUSS EACH VERSE AND TRANSLATION AMONG YOUR GROUP (ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR). Page 71*

*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR). Page 83*

*QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR DISCUSSION AMONG YOUR GROUP (ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR). Page 84*

## ***ROMANS CHAPTER 4***

**In Your Group Read Romans chapter four (aloud) in a modern translation or read it in the King James Version (below). As a Group, Discuss the general content of the chapter.**

### **THE LETTER OF ROMANS CHAPTER 4 King James Version**

**ROMANS 4: [1]** What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? **[2]** For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. **[3]** For what saith the scripture? **ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (GENESIS 15:6).** **[4]** Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. **[5]** But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. **[6]** Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, **[7]** Saying, **BLESSED ARE THEY WHOSE INIQUITIES ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED. [8] BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN (PSALM 32:1-2).** **[9]** ¶ Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. **[10]** How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. **[11]** And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: **[12]** And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. **[13]** For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. **[14]** For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith

is made void, and the promise made of none effect: [15] Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. [16] Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, [17] ¶ (As it is written, **I HAVE MADE THEE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS GENESIS 17:5,**) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. [18] Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, **SO SHALL THY SEED BE (GENESIS 15:5).** [19] And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: [20] He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; [21] And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. [22] And therefore **IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (GENESIS 15:6).** [23] ¶ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; [24] But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; [25] Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GROUP: Read and Discuss** each verse and translation along with the “Additional Information” in each box provided.

**ROMANS CHAPTER 4  
VERSES 1-3**

**Romans 4: [1] What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? [2] For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. [3] For what saith the scripture? ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (GENESIS 15:6). (King James Version)**

<sup>1</sup>Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What were his experiences concerning this question of being saved by faith? <sup>2</sup>Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, he would have had something to boast about. But from God's point of view Abraham had no basis at all for pride. <sup>3</sup>For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous.” **(New Living Translation)**

<sup>1</sup>Well then, what can we say about our ancestor Abraham? <sup>2</sup>If he became acceptable to God because of what he did, then he would have something to brag about. But he would never be able to brag about it to God. <sup>3</sup>The Scriptures say, “God accepted Abraham because Abraham had faith in him.” **(Contemporary English Version)**

So how do we fit what we know of Abraham, our first father in the faith, into this new way of looking at things? If Abraham, by what he *did* for God, got God to approve

him, he could certainly have taken credit for it. But the story we're given is a God-story, not an Abraham-story. What we read in Scripture is, "Abraham entered into what God was doing for him, and *that* was the turning point. He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own." (verses 1-3) **(The Message)**

[1] "Then what should we say about Abraham, our ancestor? What did he gain from his human experience? [2] If Abraham was made righteous by human effort, then he would have something to boast about." – **but not with God!** [3] What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and so God declared him a righteous man." *Genesis 15:6 (The Simple English Bible)*

[1] What shall we say then about Abraham, the father of our Jewish nation? What did he discover about this? [2] Because if Abraham obtained right standing with God by something he did, he had something to brag about. But he couldn't brag before God! [3] Because what does the Scripture say? *Abraham believed what God had promised him. And because of that he was credited with right standing with God, because he believed. (The Last Days Bible)*

**Additional Information: (Verse 1)** – Since Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and was looked upon by them as being completely acceptable in God's sight, it will strengthen Paul's argument to point out that Abraham was put right with God through faith, rather than through obedience to the Law (Help for Translators, p. 73).

**(Verse 2)** – According to certain rabbinic teachings of Paul's day, Abraham's faith gave him grounds to boast, not only before men but also before God. But it is Paul's intention to demonstrate through the following quotation from Scripture (Gen. 15:6) that Abraham had no grounds on which to boast before God (Help for Translators, p. 74). Abraham had nothing "to boast about," for Genesis 15:6 proves that it was by faith, not by law-keeping, that he was counted righteous. James also points to Abraham as an example of one who demonstrates true faith by his works (James 2:21).

**"Justified."** **"Justification"** is derived from the Greek verb *dikaioo*, meaning "to acquit" or "to declare righteous," used by Paul in Romans 4:2, 5; 5:1. It is a legal term used of a favorable verdict in a trial. The word depicts a courtroom setting, with God presiding as the Judge, determining the faithfulness of each person to the law. In the first section of Romans, Paul makes it clear that no one can withstand God's judgment (Romans 3:9-20). The law was not given to justify sinners but to expose their sin. To remedy this deplorable situation, God sent His Son to die for our sins in our place. When we believe in Jesus, God imputes His righteousness to us, and we are declared righteous before God. In this way, God demonstrates that He is both a righteous Judge and the one who declares us righteous, or justifier (Romans 3:26) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1516).

**(Verse 3)** – The particle with which Paul begins this verse indicates that this is a continuation of the argument begun in the preceding verses. The reason that Abraham cannot boast is because of what the Scriptures say about his justification (Help for Translators, p. 74). Salvation by faith, not by works (that is, keeping the law), is not an exclusively New Testament doctrine; it is also characteristic of the Old Testament. Paul bypasses Moses and turns to Abraham as the example of faith. Abraham had faith in God, that is he maintained a loyal and devoted attachment to his God, believed in His promises (Romans 4:20-21; Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5-6), and responded in obedience (Gen. 12:1-4, 22:1-19; Heb. 11:8-19; Jas. 2:21-22) (The Full Life Study Bible, p. 319).

**"Counted** unto him." This word can also be translated "imputed" (Romans 4:6, 8, 11, 23-24). Used in both financial and legal settings, this Greek word, which occurs nine times in chapter 4 alone, means to take something that belongs to someone and credit to another's account (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1516).

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ROMANS CHAPTER 4  
**VERSES 4-5**

**Romans 4: [4] Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. [5] But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (King James Version)**

<sup>4</sup> Money paid to workers isn't a gift. It is something they earn by working. <sup>5</sup> But you cannot make God accept you because of something you do. God accepts sinners only because they have faith in him. **(Contemporary English Version)**

**[4]** Now to a laborer, his wages are not counted as a favor *or* gift, but as an obligation (something owed to him). **[5]** But to one who, not working [by the Law], trusts (believes fully) in Him Who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness (the standing acceptable to God). **(Amplified New Testament)**

**[4]** When a person works, his pay is not given to him as a gift. He earns the pay he gets. **[5]** But a person cannot do any work that will make him right with God. So that person must trust in God. Then God accepts that person's faith (*trust*), and that makes him right with God. God is the One who makes even evil people right. **(The Easy-to-Read New Testament)**

If you're a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it's something only *God* can do, and you trust him to do it – you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked – well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, *by* God. Sheer gift. (verses 4-5) **(The Message)**

**[4]** If a man works, his pay is not a gift. It is something he has earned. **[5]** If a man has not worked to be saved, but has put his trust in God Who saves men from the punishment of their sins, that man is made right with God because of his trust in God. **(The New Life Testament)**

**[4]** Now when a man works, his wages are not a gift, but the payment of what his employer owes him. **[5]** But when a person does no work to become right with God, but believes the One who makes ungodly people right with Himself, he obtains right standing with God because of his faith. **(The Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verses 4-5)** – The apostle Paul now discusses the significance of the Scripture quotation Genesis 15:6. He pointed out that a worker's wages are what are owed him because he earned them, and are not graciously given to him as a gift. Conversely, a person who is not working but is believing on (these participles are in the present tense) God justifies the wicked (*asebe*, "the ungodly, impious"; (Romans 5:6), his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:3). Abraham was the latter kind of person as the Scripture stated. He was justified not because he worked for it but because he trusted God (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 453).

In verse 4 work is to be understood in the ordinary sense of working for pay. In verse 5, however, the concern is not with work in the ordinary sense of physical activity but with "working for merit with God" (Help for Translators, p. 75). It is a general principle that wages are earned by work, not received "as grace." But Genesis 15:6 makes no mention of works on Abraham's part, only of the trust he had in God. Although faith was Abraham's action, it contributed nothing to Abraham's resultant righteousness before God, which was God's own gift (v. 4). In this sense while faith as the instrument of justification involves human activity, it is not a "work" of merit. The righteousness of God was "accounted" to Abraham (Rom. 4:3) and not earned by him (New Geneva Study Bible, p. 1773).

**(Verse 5)** – "Justifieth the ungodly." Only those who relinquish all claims to goodness and acknowledge they are ungodly are candidates for justification (Luke 5:32) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1516). Justification by faith rests on the principle that God imputes righteousness to the ungodly as a

free gift. Salvation is not, therefore, earned by the sinner but is freely given to him when he puts his faith in the blood of Jesus Christ (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 358). When God sees the believer's heart turned toward Christ in faith, He freely forgives his sins, counts his faith as righteousness, and accepts him as His child (Romans 4:5-8). The faith that is counted for righteousness and brings forgiveness is faith in Christ and His atoning death (Romans 3:24-26). Absolutely nothing else but Christ's sacrificial death on the cross is the ground for reconciliation to God (Romans 5:10).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 6-8

**Romans 4: [6] Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, [7] Saying, BLESSED ARE THEY WHOSE INIQUITIES ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED. [8] BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN (PSALM 32:1-2). (King James Version)**

<sup>6</sup>King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared to be righteous: <sup>7</sup>"Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, what joy for those whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord. **(New Living Translation)**

**[6]** David talks about the happiness of a man whom God regards as righteous (without human effort): **[7]** "Sinners who are forgiven are happy. Their sins have been covered. **[8]** If the Lord *God* does not count a man's sin, then that man is happy." *Psalms 32:1-2 (The Simple English Bible)*

**[6]** David tells of this. He spoke of how happy the man is who puts his trust in God without working to be saved from the punishment of sin. **[7]** "Those people are happy whose sinful acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered. **[8]** Those people are happy whose sins the Lord will not remember." (Psalm 32:1-2) **(The New Life Testament)**

**[6]** David said the same thing when he wrote about the happy state of those who were declared "not guilty" by God, even though they hadn't worked to obtain this pardon. He wrote: **[7]** *How happy are those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sins are pardoned. [8] Yes, how extremely happy and blessed is the person whose sins will never be charged against him by the Lord. (The Last Days Bible)*

**Additional Information: (Verse 6) – "Without works."** Through works one seeks to earn salvation as the workman earns his wages (Romans 4:4); through faith one accepts salvation as a free gift from God, and so experiences God's forgiveness (Romans 4:5) (Help for Translators, p. 77).

**(Verses 6-8) –** Paul turns for support of his argument to Psalm 32:1-2 a penitential psalm written by David after his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband (2 Sam. 11). In spite of the enormity of his sin and the utter absence of personal merit, David knew the blessing of imputed righteousness (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1516).

ROMANS CHAPTER 4  
VERSES 9-10

**Romans 4: [9] ¶ Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. [10] How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (King James Version)**

**[9]** But is this happiness *only* for the circumcised –*the Jews*- or is it for the uncircumcised –*the Gentiles*- too? Well, as we have been saying, God accepted Abraham’s faith as making him righteous. **[10]** And when did this happen? Was he accepted as righteous before or after he had gone through the rite of circumcision? It was before, not afterwards! **(The New Translation)**

<sup>9</sup>Now then, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it for Gentiles, too? Well, what about Abraham? We have been saying he was declared righteous by God because of his faith. <sup>10</sup>But how did his faith help him? Was he declared righteous only after he had been circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? The answer is that God accepted him first, and then he was circumcised later! **(New Living Translation)**

**[9]** Is this happiness given to the Jews only? Or is it given also to the people who are not Jews? We say again, “Abraham put his trust in God and that made him right with God.” (Genesis 15:6) **[10]** When did this happen? Was it before or after Abraham went through the religious act of becoming a Jew? It was before. **(The New Life Testament)**

<sup>9</sup>Now then, the question: Is this blessing given only to those who have faith in Christ but also keep the Jewish laws, or is the blessing also given to those who do not keep the Jewish rules but only trust in Christ? Well, what about Abraham? We say that he received these blessings through his faith. Was it by faith alone, or because he also kept the Jewish rules? <sup>10</sup>For the answer to that question, answer this one: *When* did God give this blessing to Abraham? It was *before he became a Jew*—before he went through the Jewish initiation ceremony of circumcision. **(The Living Bible)**

**[9]** Does this blessing of forgiveness apply only to the Jews, who have been circumcised, or to the uncircumcised Gentiles as well? Remember, we discovered that right standing with God was credited to Abraham because he believed what God promised him. **[10]** Now think: What were the circumstances when he believed and was given right standing with God? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was before he was circumcised, not after. **(Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verses 9-10)** – The questions which Paul raises in these verses indicate an important transition in his argument, because according to certain Jewish rabbis the blessings described in Psalm 32 applied only to the people of Israel. Paul must now show that the happiness referred to in the psalm applies not only to the Jewish people but to the Gentiles as well. In order to make his argument even stronger, Paul returns again to the passage in Genesis 15:6. God accepted Abraham as righteous when he was not yet circumcised (Help for Translators, pgs. 78-79).

It is true that both pre-law Abraham and under-law David received righteousness. But, so the Jew would argue, both of them were also circumcised. Since circumcision is the sign of the covenant between God and His chosen people (Gen. 17:9-14), is it not possible that this was the ground of their justification? The answer is clear. “Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness” (Rom. 4:9; Gen. 15:6) while he was yet uncircumcised (Liberty Bible Commentary, p. 358). Abraham was eighty-six when Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16), and Abraham was ninety-nine when he was circumcised. But God

declared him righteous before Ishmael had even been conceived (Gen. 15:6; 16:2-4) – at least fourteen years before Abraham’s circumcision (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1517).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 11-12

**Romans 4: [11] And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: [12] And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. (King James Version)**

[11] He was circumcised as a sign of the covenant God had made with him. It showed that his faith had made him right with God before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the father of all believers who have not been circumcised. God accepts their faith. So their faith makes them right with him. [12] Abraham is also the father of the circumcised who believe. So just being circumcised is not enough. Those who are circumcised must also follow the steps of our father Abraham. He had faith before he was circumcised. **(New International Reader’s Version)**

<sup>11</sup>The circumcision ceremony was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are made right with God by faith. <sup>12</sup>And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised. **(New Living Translation)**

<sup>11</sup>Abraham let himself be circumcised to show that he had been accepted because of his faith even before he was circumcised. This makes Abraham the father of all who are acceptable to God because of their faith, even though they are not circumcised. <sup>12</sup>This also makes Abraham the father of everyone who is circumcised and has faith in God, as Abraham did before he was circumcised. **(Contemporary English Version)**

<sup>11</sup>It wasn’t until later on, *after* God had promised to bless him *because of his faith*, that he was circumcised. The circumcision ceremony was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him just and good in his sight—before the ceremony took place. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who believe and are saved without obeying Jewish laws. We see, then, that those who do not keep these rules are justified by God through faith. <sup>12</sup>And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those Jews who have been circumcised. They can see from his example that it is not this ceremony that saves them, for Abraham found favor with God by faith alone *before he was circumcised*. **(Living Bible)**

[11] and when he was *circumcised* later it was only *as a sign* and guarantee that the faith he had before his circumcision justified him. In this way Abraham became the ancestor of all uncircumcised believers, so that they too might be considered righteous;

[12] and ancestor, also, of those who though circumcised do not rely on that fact alone, but follow our ancestor Abraham along the path of faith he trod before he had been circumcised. **(Jerusalem Bible)**

[11] It was later that he was circumcised. This was a seal, as it were, an outward indication of the right standing he already had, because he believed God while he was still uncircumcised. So he is actually the spiritual father of all uncircumcised people as well, who believe and are made right with God because of their faith. [12] Of course, he is the father of the Jews – but only of those who are not only circumcised, but who also live the same obedient life of faith that Abraham lived even before he was circumcised.

### **(The Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verse 11)** – The order in Abraham’s case – faith and then righteousness credited to him – made it unmistakably clear that righteousness could be reckoned to the Gentiles who believed (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 519).

**“Sign & Seal.”** Circumcision was God’s seal of righteousness. This is true also of Christian baptism. It is an outward sign declaring salvation and is God’s seal of approval on the finished work of Christ in behalf of the believer (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 359).

**(Verse 12)** – Note that Abraham is not the father of those who have only the external sign; but rather he is the father of those who walk in the faith that he had before he had any external sign (Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 519). Racially, Abraham is the father of all Jews (circumcised); spiritually, he is the father of both believing Jews (Rom. 4:12) and believing Gentiles (uncircumcised; Rom. 4:11) (See Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:29) (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1517).

**“Who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.”** The faith of Abraham was a true faith that endured, believed, trusted, obeyed, grew strong, and gave glory to God (Rom. 4:16-21). This is the type of faith that makes us believers (The Full Life Study Bible, p. 320).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 13-14

**Romans 4: [13] For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. [14] For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: (King James Version)**

[13] So *God’s* promise to Abraham and his descendants – that he would inherit the world – did not come through *Abraham’s obedience to the Law*, but came as a result of his being made right with God by means of faith. [14] For if people could become heirs of God by obeying *God’s Law*, then faith is not needed and *God’s promise to those who have faith* is pointless. **(The New Translation)**

<sup>13</sup> It is clear, then, that God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not based on obedience to God’s law, but on the new relationship with God that comes by faith. <sup>14</sup> So if you claim that God’s promise is for those who obey God’s law and think they are “good enough” in God’s sight, then you are saying that faith is useless. And in that case, the promise is also meaningless. **(New Living Translation)**

<sup>13</sup> Abraham and his descendants received the promise that they would get the whole world. He did not receive that promise through the law, but through being right with God by his faith. <sup>14</sup> If people could receive what God promised by following the law,

then faith is worthless. And God's promise to Abraham is worthless, **(New Century Version)**

<sup>13</sup>It is clear, then, that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not because Abraham obeyed God's laws but because he trusted God to keep his promise. <sup>14</sup>So if you still claim that God's blessings go to those who are "good enough," then you are saying that God's promises to those who have faith are meaningless, and faith is foolish. **(The Living Bible)**

**[13]** God promised to give the world to him and to all his family after him. He did not make this promise because Abraham obeyed the Jewish Law. He promised to give the world to Abraham because he put his trust in God. This made him right with God.

**[14]** If those who obey the Jewish Law are to get the world, then a person putting his trust in God means nothing. God's promise to Abraham would be worth nothing. **(The New Life Testament)**

**[13]** Abraham and his descendants received the promise that they would get the whole world. But Abraham did not receive that promise because he followed the law. Abraham received that promise because he was right with God through his faith. **[14]** If people could get the things that God promised by following the law, then faith is worthless. And God's promise to Abraham is worthless. **(The Easy-to-Read New Testament)**

**[13]** Because God did not promise to give the whole world to Abraham and his descendants because Abraham had obeyed His laws, but because Abraham believed what He promised him. That's how he came to be declared right with God. **[14]** After all, if they had become God's heirs by obeying His laws, then our faith has no value and God's promise to Abraham is worthless, **(The Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verse 13) – "The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law."** The promise was made to Abraham and to his seed. In Galatians 3:16 the "seed" is obviously Jesus Christ. the promise of inheriting the world (See Psa. 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Mt. 5:5) must be understood in relationship to the Messiah's domination of this earth as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16) (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 359). The full realization of this awaits Christ's return.

**(Verse 14) – "The promise made of none effect."** Making a promise contingent on an impossible condition nullifies the promise (MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1517).

#### ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 15-17

**Romans 4: [15] Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. [16] Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, [17] ¶ (As it is written, I HAVE MADE THEE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS GENESIS 17:5,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (King James Version)**

**[15]** Law involves the possibility of punishment for breaking the law – only where there is no law can that be avoided. **[16]** That is why what fulfills the promise depends on faith, so that it may be a free gift and be available to all of Abraham's descendants,

not only those who belong to the Law but also those who belong to the faith of Abraham who is the father of all of us. [17] As the scripture says: *I have made you the ancestor of many nations* – Abraham is our father in the eyes of God, in whom he put his faith, and who brings the dead to life and calls into being what does not exist. **(Jerusalem Bible)**

[15] Law can bring only retribution, and where there is no law there can be no breach of law. [16] The promise was made on the ground of faith in order that it might be a matter of sheer grace, and that it might be valid for all Abraham's descendants, not only for those who hold by the law, but also for those who have Abraham's faith. For he is the father of us all, [17] as scripture says: 'I have appointed you to be a father of many nations.' In the presence of God, the God who makes the dead live and calls into being things that are not, Abraham had faith. **(Revised English Bible)**

[15] For the Law results in [divine] wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression [of it either]. [16] Therefore, [inheriting] the promise is the outcome of faith *and* depends [entirely] on faith, in order that it might be given as an act of grace (unmerited favor), to make it stable *and* valid *and* guaranteed to all his descendants – not only to the devotees *and* adherents of the Law, but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, who is [thus] the father of us all. [17] As it is written, I have made you the father of many nations. [He was appointed our father] in the sight of God in Whom he believed, Who gives life to the dead and speaks of the non-existent things that [He has foretold and promised] as if they [already] existed. [Gen. 17:5.] **(Amplified New Testament)**

[15] Because God's laws only bring His angry judgment. But where no law is involved, there is no breaking of any law. [16] So, in order to guarantee His promises to all of Abraham's spiritual children, God forgives us by granting us favor we don't deserve when we believe Him. This applies not only to those who had the Laws of Moses, but also to everyone else who lives by the kind of faith that Abraham had. Indeed, Abraham is the spiritual father of all of us. [17] God told Abraham, *I have made you the father of many nations*. This is how God sees the matter - the God whom Abraham trusted – the God who raises the dead to life and speaks of those things not in existence with as much certainty as though they existed already. **(The Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information:** Paul had pointed out to the Galatians, the law was given 430 years later than God's promise to Abraham and could not invalidate it (Gal. 3:17). The Mosaic law does indeed pronounce a blessing on those who keep it, but at the same time it invokes a curse on those who break it. And in view of the universal failure to keep the law, the curse is more prominent than the blessing: "the law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4:15). A sinful tendency may indeed be present in the absence of any law; but it takes a legal enactment to crystallize that tendency into a positive transgression or breach of law. And for each such transgression the law fixes an appropriate penalty; this is inherent in the principle of retribution which is inseparable from the idea of law. The law lays down penalties for those who break it. A gracious promise such as God made to Abraham belong to a totally different realm from law. Abraham's justification and blessings were based on his faith in God; they were not earned by merit or effort on his part (as would have been the case had they been conditional on law-keeping) but bestowed on him by God's grace. And the principle on which God thus dealt with Abraham extends to his descendants – not to his natural descendants as such, for they have become subject to the obligations of the law, but to his spiritual descendants, those who follow the example of Abraham's faith. This, says Paul, is what God meant when he gave him the name Abraham in place of Abram, as he was formerly called, and said: 'I have made thee a father of many nations.' These comprise all, Jews and Gentiles

alike, who believe in God; Abraham is the father of all believers (Tyndale NT Commentary, F.F. Bruce, pgs. 112-113).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 18-20

**Romans 4: [18] Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, SO SHALL THY SEED BE (GENESIS 15:5). [19] And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: [20] He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; (King James Version)**

<sup>18</sup>When God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, Abraham believed him. God had also said, "Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars," even though such a promise seemed utterly impossible! <sup>19</sup>And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though he knew that he was too old to be a father at the age of one hundred and that Sarah, his wife, had never been able to have children. <sup>20</sup>Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. **(New Living Translation)**

<sup>18</sup>God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations. <sup>19</sup>Abraham's faith never became weak, not even when he was nearly a hundred years old. He knew that he was almost dead and that his wife Sarah could not have children. <sup>20</sup>But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God. **(Contemporary English Version)**

<sup>18</sup>So, when God told Abraham that he would give him a son who would have many descendants and become a great nation, Abraham believed God even though such a promise just couldn't come to pass! <sup>19</sup>And because his faith was strong, he didn't worry about the fact that he was too old to be a father at the age of one hundred, and that Sarah his wife, at ninety, was also much too old to have a baby. <sup>20</sup>But Abraham never doubted. He believed God, for his faith and trust grew ever stronger, and he praised God for this blessing even before it happened. **(The Living Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verse 18)** – Grammatically this is known as an oxymoron, a figure of speech in which contradictory ideas are combined. Abraham against hope, or beyond hope, nevertheless believed in hope. When the promise was given that Abraham would become the father of many nations, there was no human ground for hope with regard to Abraham's wife Sarah bearing a child. Although beyond hope, Abraham believed God anyway and his faith generated hope (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 360).

**(Verse 19)** – "He considered not." Abraham did not consider the inability of his ninety-year-old wife to conceive and withstand the pain of childbirth (Ibid., p. 360).

**(Verse 20)** – "He staggered not at the promise of God." Abraham was not of a divided mind (Ibid., p. 360). Through nearly 10 years of waiting for fulfillment of a seemingly impossible promise, Abraham's faith, rather than growing weak, grew stronger, while he continued to give glory to God (Spirit Filled Life Bible, p. 1694).

ROMANS CHAPTER 4  
**VERSES 21-22**

**Romans 4: [21] And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. [22] And therefore IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (GENESIS 15:6). (King James Version)**

<sup>21</sup>He was completely sure that God was well able to do anything he promised.

<sup>22</sup>And because of Abraham's faith God forgave his sins and declared him "not guilty."  
**(The Living Bible)**

He drew strength from his faith, and, while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise. This was the "faith" which was counted unto him for righteousness. **(Phillips Translation)**

**[21]** He was absolutely sure that God would be able to do what he had promised.

**[22]** That is why Abraham, through faith, "was accepted as righteous by God."

**(Today's English Version)**

**[21]** In the complete conviction that He was able to make good His promise. **[22]** For this reason it was accounted to him as righteousness. **(Berkeley Version)**

**[21]** Fully satisfied *and* assured that God was able *and* mighty to keep His word *and* to do what He had promised. **[22]** That is why his faith was credited to him as righteousness (right standing with God). **(Amplified New Testament)**

**[21]** He was convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. **[22]** So, because *of this faith*, "God declared Abraham a righteous man." *Genesis 15:6* **(The Simple English Bible)**

**[21]** He was absolutely sure that God was able to do what He had promised.

**[22]** And so, because of his faith, God credited him with right standing with Himself.

**(The Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verse 22)** – The New International Translation translates this verse, "This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness" because it was true faith, that is, complete confidence in God's promise (NIV Study Bible, p. 1712).

While Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees, God promised him that he would be the heir of the world (Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 4:13). How long he had been a believer in God, we are not told. Years later, God promised him a seed as numerous as the stars in heaven. Abraham believed in God and God counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:5-6). About 15 years later, God promised that Sarah would bear a son. Abraham believed (Genesis 17:15-21). Perhaps 25 years later, God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac, upon an altar (Gen. 22:2). Abraham's faith did not fail. James says, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23). Abraham was righteous by faith, and his faith was affirmed on at least, four separate occasions. Abraham's faith covered a period of perhaps 50 years. It is this kind of faith that God calls every believer to exercise. A momentary, one-time act of faith that does not continue is not saving faith according to the scriptures (Lk. 8:13). A faith that does not follow God is not faith (Matt. 16:24).

Believers are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). But there are Biblical truths about the nature of saving faith which should be noted. While one is saved by faith, the faith that saves is not alone. James states, "faith without works is dead" (Jam. 2:14-26); Paul says it is "a faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Saving faith is a faith so vital that it cannot avoid the expressions of love and obedience toward the Savior and of service toward others. Faith that merely trusts God to forgive our sins but does not include sincere repentance from sin and active commitment to Christ as Lord falls short of New Testament saving faith (Full Life Study Bible, p. 320). As true as the preceding statements concerning the true nature of saving faith, it is also true that Abraham's justification was an act of pure

grace. Abraham's life was marked by mistakes, sins, and failures as well as by wisdom and goodness, but he consistently trusted God. His faith was strengthened in the obstacles he faced, and his life was an example of faith in action. Abraham looked to God, obeyed him, and waited for God to fulfill his word (Life Application Bible, p. 2035).

## ROMANS CHAPTER 4 VERSES 23-25

**Romans 4: [23] ¶ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; [24] But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; [25] Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (King James Version)**

<sup>23</sup> Now this wonderful truth—that God declared him to be righteous—wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. <sup>24</sup> It was for us, too, assuring us that God will also declare us to be righteous if we believe in God, who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God. **(New Living Translation)**

Now this counting of faith for righteousness was not recorded simply for Abraham's credit, but as a divine principle which should apply to us as well. Faith is to be reckoned as righteousness to us also, who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered to death for our sins and raised again to secure our justification. (verse 23-25) **(Phillips Translation)**

**[23]** But the words, "God gave him credit ..." weren't written only about Abraham. **[24]** No, they were also written about us, for whom God was going to do the same thing, since we believe in the One who raised our Lord Jesus back to Life from the dead. **[25]** And He's the same Jesus who was handed over to die because of our sins, and was raised back to Life again to make us perfectly holy in God's sight. **(New Testament in Everyday American English)**

**[23]** But [the words], It was credited to him, were written not for his sake alone, **[24]** But [they were written] for our sakes too. [Righteousness, standing acceptable to God] will be granted *and* credited to us also who believe in (trust in, adhere to, and rely on) God, Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, **[25]** Who was betrayed *and* put to death because of our misdeeds and was raised to secure our justification (our acquittal), [making our account balance and absolving us from all guilt before God]. **(Amplified New Testament)**

**[23]** But those words, "God credited him with right standing," were written not only for him. **[24]** They were also written for us, to whom right standing will be given, if we believe the promises made to us by the One who raised our Lord Jesus from among the dead. **[25]** Jesus was handed over to die for our sins. And He was raised to life again in order to grant us right standing with God. **(Last Days Bible)**

**Additional Information: (Verse 23)** – In Paul's argument this verse is transitional. Paul has demonstrated on the basis of scripture that Abraham was accepted as righteous by God through faith, and now he begins to show how this applies also to everyone else who has faith (Help for Translators, p. 89).

**(Verse 24)** – In Greek verses 23-25 form a single sentence. It is best to take the verb which Paul has used here "to whom it shall be imputed" as an eschatological reference (that is, a reference to the final day of judgment) rather than as a timeless present. In this verse Paul also makes it clear that the

same God who accepted Abraham as righteous is the one who accepts the Christian believer as righteous. Moreover the Christian's faith is the same as that which Abraham had, for it is directed toward the God who is able to bring life out of death (Help for Translators, p. 89).

**(Verse 25)** – The first part of this verse, “who was delivered for our offences,” is an allusion to Isaiah 53:4-5 (Help for Translators, p. 89). Christ's death as God's sacrificial Lamb (Jn. 1:29) was to pay the redemptive price for the sins of all people (Rom. 3:24) so that God might be free to forgive those who respond by faith to that provision (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 455).

In Romans chapter 4, Paul presented several irrefutable reasons why justification is by faith: (1) Since justification is a gift, it cannot be earned (Rom. 4:1-8). (2) Since Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, circumcision has no relationship to justification (Rom. 4:9-12). (3) Since Abraham was justified centuries before the Law, justification is not based on the Law (Rom. 4:13-17). (4) Abraham was justified because of his faith in God, not because of his works (Rom. 4:18-25) (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 455). The noun “faith” occurs ten times in this chapter and the corresponding verb “believe” occurs six times. Together the idea of believing faith is found no less than sixteen times in Romans 4. The word “righteousness” occurs in one of its forms three times. Together the idea of righteousness is found no less than eleven times in Romans 4. The application of Romans 4 is simple: *Faith in the God that raised Jesus from the dead imputes righteousness* (Liberty Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p.361). When we believe, an exchange takes place. We give Christ our sins, and he gives us his righteousness and forgiveness (2 Cor. 5:21). Sadly, many still choose to pass up this gift to continue “enjoying” their sin (Life Application Bible, p. 2035).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### *(Romans Chapter 4)*

***Instructions for Group Leader:*** Do not let the group read the following questions and answers. The leader of your group should ask the group the following questions and encourage the group to discover the answers by going to the appropriate Scriptures. **Discuss and answer (as a group) the questions correctly by using the Scripture(s). Turn to Romans Chapter 4.**

1. **Read Romans 4:1.** What is the question being asked in Romans 4:1? What did Abraham our forefather, discover in this matter of being justified?

2. **Read Romans 4:2.** If Abraham was justified, or declared righteous, by something he did (his good works), then what does he have reason to do? Glory, that is, brag or boast.

3. **Read Romans 4:3.** How does this scripture say Abraham was justified? He believed God, and God put righteousness (right-standing) to his account.
4. **Read Romans 4:4.** To the person who works, his or her wages are not reckoned, or given, as a favor but as what? As a debt, that is, an obligation.
5. **Read Romans 4:5.** A person who wants to be justified by faith must stop doing what? Stop working for it.
6. **Read Romans 4:6.** In Psalms 32, David describes people who are blessed and happy. Why are they blessed and happy? Because God put right-standing to their account without them working for it.
7. **Read Romans 4:7.** Righteousness, without working for it, is a synonym for what phrase? Iniquities forgiven and sins covered.
8. **Read Romans 4:7.** Happy are the people who have had what happen to them? Their sins forgiven and put out of their sight.
9. **Read Romans 4:8.** Happy is the person to whom the Lord will not do what? Put their sin to their account.
10. **Read Romans 4:9.** Is this happiness of being made right before God just for the Jews, or is it for the Gentiles as well? It is for both Jews and Gentiles.
11. **Read Romans 4:10.** Under what circumstances –circumcision or uncircumcision – was justification, or righteousness, credited to Abraham? When he was uncircumcised.
12. **Read Romans 4:11.** What two words describe circumcision in Romans 4:11? A sign and seal.
13. **Read Romans 4:12.** What is Romans 4:12 stating? Abraham is the spiritual father of those who are circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith that Abraham had before he was circumcised.
14. **Read Romans 4:13.** Romans 4:13 is stating that Abraham and his seed will not be the heirs of Canaan, or Palestine. What will they be heirs of? The world.
15. **Read Romans 4:14.** If any of God's promises are based on the Law, then what two things must be concluded? (1) Faith is eliminated, excluded, made void, wiped out. (2) The promise is nullified or made of none effect. See Romans 11:6.
16. **Read Romans 4:15.** The Law does not bring God's gift of salvation. What does it produce? Wrath, judgment, condemnation. The Law establishes a violation and brings wrath.

17. **Read Romans 4:16.** The promised inheritance, in which Christians share, is of what? Faith.
18. **Read Romans 4:17.** What was the object of Abraham's faith? The object of true faith is, and only is, God.
19. **Read Romans 4:18.** What specific promise did Abraham believe God for? To become the father of many nations. (Physical seed – Isaac, Messianic seed – Jesus Christ; Gal. 3:16, Spiritual seed – all believers in Jesus Christ; Gal. 3:29).
20. **Read Romans 4:19.** What was the truth about Abraham and Sara? Abraham was too old to be a father, and Sara's womb was dead.
21. **Read Romans 4:20.** How did Abraham respond? He believed the promise of God, and gave glory and praise to Him.
22. **Read Romans 4:21.** God gave a promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:2-6). How did Abraham respond to that promise? He was fully persuaded that God would keep His promise and perform what He said He would do.
23. **Read Romans 4:22.** State in your own words, what Romans 4:22 is saying. Because of a confident trust in God, Abraham became a friend of God, that is, in right-standing before God.
24. **Read Romans 4:23-25.** What is Romans 4:23-25 telling us? This story is not just about Abraham; it applies to all who desire justification before God. The same kind of faith that brought justification to Abraham is the same kind of faith that brings salvation to men today. This faith has God as its object.

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