

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 10

I. Exposition of Chapter Three. (Continued)

A. Verse 27 – “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.”

1. “Where is boasting then?” It shouldn’t be anywhere. If we are justified freely by His grace, we certainly cannot boast about receiving righteousness.
2. “By what law? Of works?” - Paul is asking rhetorically on what basis has boasting been banished? Is it on the basis of works? No way. The more we think about those things we feel we have merited or earned, the prouder we become, not the more humble!
 - a. The word “Law” is used in this context not as a reference to the Mosaic law but in the sense of a “principle.”

“Then what becomes of [our] pride and [our] boasting? It is excluded (banished, ruled out entirely). On what principle? [On the principle] of doing good deeds? No, but on the principle of faith.”

Romans 3:27 – Amplified Bible

3. “...the law of faith.” – Paul actually introduces another law here. After dealing with the law of conscience (2:15) and the law of Moses or law of works (2:25), he brings in a higher law – the law of faith.

B. Verses 28-30 - Justification (acquittal in the court of God) is found, for both Jew and Gentile, apart from the deeds of the law.

1. Doesn’t James contradict this in passages like **James 2:14-26**? How can we say that it is faith *alone* that saves?
 - a. It is true faith alone saves, but true faith, saving faith, if it is genuine will have some kind of corresponding action that follows.

C. Verse 31 – “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

1. We can see how someone might ask this. “If the law doesn’t make us righteous, what good is it? Paul, you have just made the law void. You are going against the law of God.”
2. “Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” - Of course, Paul does not make void the law. As Paul will demonstrate in Romans 4, the law *anticipated* the coming Gospel of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the Gospel *establishes the law*, fulfilling its own predictions.

“There is no conflict between law and faith. The law made the way for faith and prepared sinners for faith, but when faith came, personified in Christ, the law had fulfilled its purpose, function, and ministry. It ended in Christ. Christ is the end of the law (Romans 10”4). ‘Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed’ (Galatians 3:23, also 3:17-25).”¹

II. Exposition of Chapter Four. (NOTE: In verses 1-12, Paul brings in to Old Testament examples of people who were declared righteous by faith. These two are Abraham and David which are two of the most highly regarded by the Jews.)

A. Verses 1-5 – Abraham justified by Faith before the Law (developed more in verses 9-25).

1. Verse 1 – “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?” – Paul again asks a rhetorical question in anticipation of an objection. The Jew might remind Paul that Abraham was righteous and so the natural question that arises is how did he become righteous?
 - a. The word “father” here means, “forefather” denoting the “founder of a family”. Most scholars seem to think the phrase “according to the flesh” goes with the idea of forefather. In other words, Abraham was the Jews natural (flesh) forefather. This is as opposed to a contrast seen in **verse 11**.
2. Verse 2 – “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about but not before God.” This is a reiteration of the point made in **3:27**.
3. Verse 3 – “For what does the Scripture say?” - The final “court of appeal” is the Scriptures which do not say that Abraham was declared righteous because of his works. Paul then quotes from **Genesis 15:3** which clearly declares that “Abraham *believed* God and it was *accounted to him for righteousness*.”
 - a. The word “accounted” is a word used in early secular documents meaning; “to take something that belongs to someone else and credit it to another’s account.”

¹Kevin J. Conner, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1999), 127.

b. What did Abraham believe?

- 1) The Gospel was preached to Abraham – **Galatians 3:6-8.**
- 2) Jesus said to the Jews, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”** – **John 8:56.**
- 3) Refer to **Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 18:17-18; 22:16-18.** (cf. **Galatians 3:16-29**).

4. Verses 4-5 - A distinction made between Grace and Works.

- a. **Verse 4 - “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”** - The idea of grace stands opposite to the principle of works; grace has to do with receiving the freely given gift of God, works has to do with earning our merit before God.
- b. A system of works seeks to put God in **“debt”** to us, to have God owe us His favor because of our good behavior. In works-thinking, God owes us salvation or blessing because of our good works.
- c. **Verse 5 - “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”** - Righteousness can never be accounted to the one who approaches God on the principle of works. Instead it is given to the one who believes on Him who justifies the ungodly.

B. Verses 6-8 – David justified by Faith under the Law. (NOTE: To the Jew, there was no greater king than David. Both Abraham and David were covenant men, and both received the promises of the covenant concerning the Messiah (II Samuel 7:5-17). Jesus was descended from both of them (cf. Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3).

1. **Verse 6 - “Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works”** - King David of the Old Testament knew what it was like to be a guilty sinner; he knew the seriousness of sin and how good it is to be truly forgiven. If David were judged on works alone, the righteous God must condemn him.
2. **Verses 7-8** - This is a quote from **Psalm 32:1-2**, and emphasizes again that God has always had only one way to save sinners, even in Old Testament times. The **“blessedness”** of sins forgiven is the restoration of fellowship with God! David knew by experience that **“blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven.”**

C. Verses 9-12 - Abraham and Circumcision.

1. **Verses 9-10 – Abraham was counted righteous before he was circumcised.**
2. **Verse 11 – “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith...”** - After Abraham had been called and reckoned as righteous, God gave him circumcision as a covenant sign (**Genesis 17:9–14**). In this verse **“sign”** and **“seal”** are parallel and both refer to Abraham’s faith. Circumcision was a visible mark of one who exercised faith in God.
3. **“...that he might be the father of all those who believe...”** – Abraham was given the promise that he would be the “father of many nations.” We who believe on Christ are Abraham’s seed as well. (cf. **Galatians 3:29**). **“Abraham is the father of all who believe – Gentile or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision. The emphasis is on believing, not on circumcision or uncircumcision (of the spirit, not of the flesh)...Believers are the circumcision who:**
 - **Worship God in the Spirit (cf. I Corinthians 14:15-16).**
 - **Rejoice in Christ Jesus (I Peter 1:18-19).**
 - **Have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).²**
4. **Verse 12 – “...who walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had...”** – Abraham is prime example of faith. See **Genesis 12-25.**
 - a. By faith, when he was called, he went out – **Hebrews 11:8.**
 - b. By faith he lived in a tent, looking for a city which God built – **Hebrews 11:9-16.**
 - c. By faith he paid tithes and had communion with Melchizedec – **Genesis 14:18-20.**
 - d. By faith he accepted the covenant (Genesis 22) until he offered Isaac and his faith was perfected – **Genesis 15 and 22.**

²Kevin J. Conner, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1999), 152.