

Righteousness by faith alone – God’s original Model.

Have you ever tried to convince people to change their minds when they were absolutely sure they were right???? There is not a thing you can do. There is no task in life more difficult. You can have all the right arguments, even have the right facts but they are immovable. You know the type. My mind is made up, don’t try to convince me with the facts!!”

What can you do – sprout facts and figures or maybe use an illustration that demonstrates the issue. Paul does that here. The Jews are sure they are right. Paul has to open their eyes.

Paul is about to qualify his statements from the Chapter 3 by examples from Jewish history, Jewish writings. From their very own belief structure. Paul has a habit of hitting the people exactly where it is going to hurt. He may do the same thing for us right now.

The example Paul uses is Abraham. Ab is a logical example as the Jews saw him and still see him as the father of their race The term used is that Ab was the father of all who believed.

Paul starts by saying- Lets have a look see here.

RO 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?

Lets see what Abraham is on about on this subject. Then he goes on to quote from the Old Testament what his theology on righteousness is.

He uses the Old Testament script to state his case.

3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

This quote comes from Genesis 15:6. His statement is before the law, before God made a covenant with him. This quote comes from Genesis 15:6. His statement is before the law, before God made a covenant with him. It does not say the Abraham kept the law even before it was written, and that is what some Jews apparently thought, that Ab was the perfect example of a law abiding Jew before the law existed.. No it says that Ab was right with God, not because of his faithfulness to the law or any behaviour but because of who he had faith in. Faith in God. He could have had faith in anything but it would not have done anything unless it was faith in God.

The next part of the passage is interesting.

RO 4:4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. 6 David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

If we could keep the law totally, God would be obligated to be in relationship with us. That's what it says. But as we have found out for the last 6 weeks – we sin we haven't been able to do it. But for us – who recognise we can't do it. It is about our faith. Not just our faith but who we have faith in – a forgiving and amazing God.

Paul uses another Old Testament passage to back this up. Psalm 32

***PS 32:1 Blessed is he
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.***

***PS 32:2 Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.***

***RO 4:7 "Blessed are they
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.***

***RO 4:8 Blessed is the man
whose sin the Lord will never count against him."***

Crikey, as the crocodile man would say. David says it too!!!!

Here we have 2 of the Old Testament heavy's agreeing with Paul.

There is one phrase that I want to focus on here.

his faith is credited as righteousness. Now what the heck does that mean.

It is one of those phrases that run off the tongue but is a bit hard to decipher.

It states that it does not mean that his faith was a righteous act which could therefore produce righteousness as its natural product.

Rather, it is a gift or a giving from God. In other words, it is not something that Ab possessed but something that is given, kind of like someone else going into the bank and crediting an account with money.

It is a new status, not deserved, not paid for but actual.

This is a hugely important point for us theologically. It is a huge important point for us non theologically as well. Basically, it is a huge point.

It means that there is no true inherent righteousness in any of us. (Remember, sin has stuffed that up). Sin has ruined God image in us and no matter what we do personally we can not achieve being right.

His is the huge part. It is only what we call God's grace that can do it.

Grace is explained as God's unmerited favour.

Or to use an acrostic.

God's

Riches

At

Christ's

Expense.

God grace = what God has done for us in Jesus.

Here we see Abraham as an example of that grace being imparted. He did nothing, just believed God at His word.

His belief was not only before the law, but before a covenant, which instituted circumcision. His faith was in God to such a degree that he reacted to God's prompting – faith lead to obedience. His faith o affected him – he lived obedience, most of the time, That's like us. We can probably live a life of mostly obedience, live a life of faith mostly.

Aren't we glad that Jesus lived a right life totally, aren't we glad that God is always consistent to His promises. There is no mostly with God – there is always.

His grace is consistent. It is our faith that isnt. That is why it is so amazing. That is why John Newton wrote a song that sits close to the top of all time favourite hymns. He articulated for us how amazing God's love and grace is. That one song is the most recorded song in history, that one song has been sung to more people than any other.

It is about what this passage talks about. A saving grace from an amazing God- to people like us. Let's say it like John Newton did. Wretches like us.