

ROMANS

Lesson 4

Romans Chapter 4

This week we'll examine Romans Chapter 4 and another key doctrinal principle that forms the basis for our Christian walk: how we are saved.

I continue to get good feedback on my practice of quoting our study text from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) and will continue to take that approach as we work our way through Romans.

For this week, please read the following text from the Contemporary English Version (CEV), or Romans Chapter 4 from your favorite version, before answering the questions that follow.

Romans 4

The Example of Abraham

¹Well then, what can we say about our ancestor Abraham? ²If 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. ³The Scriptures say, "God accepted Abraham because Abraham had faith in him."

⁴Money paid to workers isn't a gift. It is something they earn by working. ⁵But you cannot make God accept you because of something you do. God accepts sinners only because they have faith in him. ⁶In the Scriptures David talks about the blessings that come to people who are acceptable to God, even though they don't do anything to deserve these blessings. David says,

⁷"God blesses people
whose sins are forgiven
and whose evil deeds
are forgotten.

⁸The Lord blesses people
whose sins are erased
from his book."

⁹Are these blessings meant for circumcised people or for those who are not circumcised? Well, the Scriptures say that God accepted Abraham because Abraham had faith in him. ¹⁰But when did this happen? Was it before or after Abraham was circumcised? Of course, it was before.

¹¹Abraham 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. ¹²This also makes Abraham the father of everyone who is circumcised and has faith in God, as Abraham did before he was circumcised.

The Promise Is for All Who Have Faith

¹³God promised Abraham and his descendants that he would give them the world. This promise wasn't made because Abraham had obeyed a law, but because his faith in God made him acceptable. ¹⁴If Abraham and his descendants were given this promise because they had obeyed a law, then faith would mean nothing, and the promise would be worthless.

¹⁵God becomes angry when his Law is broken. But where there isn't a law, it cannot be broken. ¹⁶Everything depends on having faith in God, so that God's promise is assured by his great kindness. This promise isn't only for Abraham's descendants who have the Law. It is for all who are Abraham's descendants because they have faith, just as he did. Abraham is the ancestor of us all. ¹⁷The Scriptures say that Abraham would become the ancestor of many nations. This promise was made to Abraham because he had faith in God, who raises the dead to life and creates new things.

¹⁸God 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. ¹⁹Abraham'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. ²⁰But Abraham never doubted or questioned God's promise. His faith made him strong, and he gave all the credit to God.

²¹Abraham was certain that God could do what he had promised. ²²So God accepted him, ²³just as we read in the Scriptures. But these words were not written only for Abraham. ²⁴They were written for us, since we will also be accepted because of our faith in God, who raised our Lord Jesus to life. ²⁵God gave Jesus to die for our sins, and he raised him to life, so that we would be made acceptable to God.

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Our lesson considers the fundamental question: Were Old Testament people saved, and how could this happen if Christ's ministry did not begin until the time of the New Testament?

First of all, I continue to encourage you to become familiar enough with the Old Testament that you could lead someone to Christ using it as the Apostles did when the church first began. And so, let's look at salvation, redemption, faith and grace as it is, and as it was during Old Testament times. "Why?", you might ask. We do this because it will reveal a fundamental truth that existed before we were created, and we will realize that we today are no different from the Old Testament folks that we have read about. Salvation, and the means to obtaining it, have not changed and will not change.

Consider the following questions:

1. Based on your reading of Romans 4:1-3, why do you think it asserts that Abraham could not have bragged to God about what he did?
2. Why did God accept Abraham? Was it because of what he had done or would do?
3. If we were to read no further in this chapter, we would already have discovered a fundamental doctrine in verse 3, i.e., how we are saved. What does Ephesians 2:8 tell us regarding this doctrine?
4. Now examine Romans 4:4-6. What is the point being made between earning wages versus receiving a gift?
5. In Romans 4:7-12, Paul points out a very real and basic truth about Abraham and his relationship to the Law. Why is this important? What is significant here that we should be aware of?

6. In Romans 4:13, Paul recounts that God made a promise to Abraham. Why?
7. Romans 4:16 asserts that one thing provides the basis for all others and assures us of obtaining God's promises. What is it?
8. Can you define the difference between believing that God exists and having faith in God?
9. Read Romans 4:18-21. Abraham teaches us something about faith in these verses. What is it? (For a hint, read James 2:20.)
10. So, after studying about Abraham, and about God's promises to him; what does all this have to do with us? Why should we care about someone who lived and died over four thousand years ago? Read Romans 4:21-25.
11. How does this lesson's study help us in reaching others for Christ?

I pray that this lesson has revealed to you how great God's grace is, and how He loved us even before the world was created. His love for us is undying, and it was so great that He sent Jesus, His only son, to die for us, and to be resurrected to life—just as He promises resurrection to all those who place their faith in Him.

We don't earn it, we can't work for it, and we can never pay enough to get it. Salvation is God's free gift to us through grace. In exchange for that, we owe Him our love and our service. We are saved to serve and not sit. Faith, true faith, will reveal itself by how we act, who we are, and how we treat others. Can others see Jesus living in you today?

May He richly bless you as you study His Holy Word with us this week.

In Christ,

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