

Short Studies for the Skeptic Series – Part 7

Israel Was Without Excuse

Made Known to ALL Nations for the Obedience of Faith

Being that this is the last study in the series, we're showing that God left no stone unturned in making sure that Israel was without excuse that NOW the MEANS & METHOD of imputed righteousness has taken on a dramatic turn. **Rom 16:25-26** Now to him that is of power to establish you according to **my gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery**, which was **kept secret since the world began**,²⁶ But **now** is made manifest, and **by the scriptures of the prophets**, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known to all nations for the obedience of faith**:

Within this series, it's been demonstrated the essential role man had to play in the imputation of righteousness on his behalf. From the establishment of the Mosaic Law, filled with commandments, statutes & ordinances, through the ministries of John the Baptist & the Apostles preaching the baptism of repentance for remission of sins, Israel's obedience stood between them and a just God. **Deut 32:4** *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

It could be argued that after a few thousand years of living under law, one would be leery of a MAN & MESSAGE now declaring that the imputation of righteousness was no longer dependent upon one's faithful obedience. In fact, Paul was accused of such... "And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." **Rom 3:8**

The Righteousness of God Which Is By Faith of Jesus Christ

Paul drove home the point of the **means & method** in which God was now imputing righteousness outside of the law. **Rom 3:21-26** But **now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested**, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;²² Even **the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ** unto **all** and **upon all them that believe**: for there is no difference:²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;²⁴

Being **justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say, at this time his righteousness*: that **he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

The **MEANS** now was *via the 'faith of Jesus Christ' (Christ's faithfulness)*. The **METHOD, all them that believe**. Space doesn't allow me to do a deep dive into the expression, 'for the remission of sins that are past', but 'his (Jesus') righteousness' is the basis of one's justification which is '*freely by his grace*'.

Israel Was Without Excuse

Could a Jewish lawyer have argued a case that the imputation of righteousness, outside of faithful obedience, would be unrecognizable and God was unjust in such actions? Actually, Israel was without excuse! Why? Because God left two illustrations as to what imputed righteous would like in contrast to that being under the Old Testament.

Abraham

From God's perspective, Abraham demonstrated the actions of a righteous & just saint... "Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; ⁸ And **foundest his heart faithful before thee.**" **Neh 9:7-8**

Abraham is mentioned three times in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Fame Faith Chapter, in sentences starting with the expression, "**By faith**" (Heb 11:8, 9, 17). Also, as with his predecessors, (Gen 3:21; 4:4; 8:20), we find Abraham building altars (Gen 12:7, 8, 13:18, 22:9).

Obviously, if we're looking to Abraham as one illustrating imputed righteousness outside of walking 'by faith', we have to look elsewhere!

Paul's Reflections on Abraham in Genesis

Though appearing somewhat confusing at first, Paul reflects back to promises made to Abraham's seed, in reward of his obedience, to be a blessing upon families & nations (Gen 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). **Gen 22:18** And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

In zeroing in on how this would pertain in particular to the heathen, in which the scriptures foresaw, Paul points to an episode in Genes 15. Following, standing alone, is Gal 3:8. We will then see it in the context of Paul's reflections back to Abraham in Genesis (Gal 3:6-9).

Gal 3:8 And the scripture, **foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith**, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

Gal 3:6-9 Even as **Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.** ⁷ Know ye therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.** ⁸ And the scripture, **foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith**, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* ⁹ So then **they which be of faith** are blessed with faithful Abraham.

An Heretical Interpretation

Before turning to Genesis 15, to look at Abraham's unique response in which righteousness was imputed to him, a comment is unfortunately necessitated! No! God did not preach Paul's gospel (death, burial & resurrection) to Abraham. Yes, I've seen this tried to be pulled off by those believing Christ's death & resurrection was understood in the O.T.! The gospel/good news was concerning Abraham's seed being a blessing!

Believing Accounted for Righteousness

Gen 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward. ² And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus? ³ And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. ⁴ And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying,

This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. ⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶ And **he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

What a contrast! Apart from living out righteousness via faithful obedience, on that day God imparted righteousness on the basis of simply believing what God was promising!

Justified Not of Works

Here's Paul's argument demonstrating Abraham as being just and an example of receiving imputed righteousness via believing outside of works.

Rom 4:1-5 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.** 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.**

From here, we immediately bleed over unto the second example.

David

David Also Describeth the Blessedness of Man

Rom 4:6-7 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.*

Unlike Peter, who emphasized Jesus being raised to sit on the right hand of God in prophesied promise to the seed of David (Acts 2:22-35), Paul heads in an entirely different direction. Though David, a man after God's own heart (1Sam 13:14) had his victories, his life was also filled with turmoil as result of sin. According to the law, between committing adultery with Bathsheba

and arrangement with Joab to have Uriah the husband of Bathsheba killed, David should have been either excommunicated from Israel or stoned.

Thou Desirest Not Sacrifice Else Would I Give It

2nd Samuel 12:1-18 is the drama recorded between the prophet Nathan & David over David's evil actions committed against Uriah and the taking of his wife Bathsheba. David's response to Nathan's fictitious story that illustrated what David actual did was... "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die:" **2Sam 12:5** Nathan made clear that David's actions would be reflected in his household and to be made public... **2Sam 12:12** For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

I'll never forget an inhouse movie I watched while attending LeTourneau College, Longview TX. 1970/71, on this event in David's life. Under law, there were no sacrifices for his actions and it portrayed David before the altar under heavy conviction (Ps 51:16-17). To get resolve, David grabbed the horns on the altar knowing that God was either going to kill him or show mercy. David's response to Nathan was... "...I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." **2Sam 12:13**

Israel's Dual Example of Imputed Righteousness Without Works

As Abraham was an example to Israel what imputed righteousness looked like outside of the law by simply believing, David was Israel's example what imputed righteousness looked like under law without works... "Blessed *is he* whose transgression *is* forgiven, *whose sin is* covered."

Psalm 32:1

Why Confusion Over the Relationship Between Works & Faith

Paul asked a rhetorical question with a distinguishable answer... "*Is he* the God of the **Jews** only? *is he* not also of the **Gentiles**? Yes, of the **Gentiles** also: ³⁰ Seeing *it is* one God, which shall **justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.**" **Rom 3:29-30**

From the beginning of creation, if 'believing' was the only issue in determining imputed righteousness or one being just, why then so many variations of the usage of the word 'faith'?

Consider the different biblical expressions: by faith; through faith; of faith; his faith; faith of God; faith of Jesus Christ; faith of the Son of God; faith of the gospel; faith of the operation of God; faith of the saints. Though ‘faith’ often has the connation of ‘believing’, it’s just as likely speaking of faithfulness in relationship with more than one party... “But the scripture hath concluded **all under sin**, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be **given to them that believe.**” **Gal 3:22.** Context is essential!

Paul, speaking of justification under law and of the faith to come can only be understood in the light of Paul discerning between justification ‘by’ &/or ‘through’ faith!

Acts 13:39 And by him **all that believe are justified from all things**, from which **ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

Gal 3:23 But **before faith came**, we were kept under the law, shut up unto **the faith which should afterwards be revealed.**

Conclusion

Not Written for His Sake Alone but for Us Also

Reflecting back on Abraham, we conclude Paul’s argument in illustrating what the imputation of righteousness looks like outside of the law... **Rom 4:16-25** 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**,) 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.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 Sara'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.**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.**

Both, the Jew under law and the ‘nations’ addressed in Paul’s gospel, which are ‘**of faith**’ (Rom 16:26), have ties to Abraham as their ‘**father**’; the **Jew ‘by faith’**, the **nations ‘through faith’**.

In capping off this study series in there being more than one gospel... “Now to **Abraham** and **his seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to **seeds**, as of **many**; but as of **one**, And to **thy seed**, which is **Christ**.” **Gal 3:16**