



## Focus Points...*For Romans 4*

### Listen...

- \* As Paul details how Abraham is truly the Father of both Jews and Gentiles who, by faith, have been saved by Jesus Christ.

### Prayer:

Holy Father, since the Fall of Adam and Eve, You graciously intervened with Your promises of salvation. Through Jesus Christ, our sins are paid for. By the gift of faith, all who believe in You are Your true children. Enable me, as I read Romans 4, to understand how You consider me—and all people—righteous because of the work of Your son, Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

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### Commentary:

How are we saved? Only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The Jewish readers of Romans, steeped in the belief that they were saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, had difficulty with grace.

In Romans 4, Paul continued his discussion in Romans 3. His point in chapter three was that salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was nothing new. It was merely the continuation—and fulfillment—of God's plan of salvation. This was the same plan of salvation which was revealed to the patriarchs and, specifically, to the greatest patriarch of Israel, Abraham.

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?" Paul asked in 4:1. Abraham, Paul demonstrated, was not saved by his good works. Instead, "his faith [was] credited as righteousness" (4:1). The Greek word for "credited" is *logizomai*.

Last week I called a local restaurant for my favorite dessert to go: rice pudding. The waitress—who was serving as a fill-in manager—answered the phone. When I placed my order, she immediately recognized my voice. She had been my server at the restaurant several times. Through a mutual friend, I knew she had a difficult financial situation. She also shared her situation with me. As a gesture of generosity, I always gave her a very generous tip.

"I know who you are. We'll have it ready for you when you get here." When I arrived, the rice was ready. As I reached into my billfold to get my payment, with gratitude she said, "No, Pastor, this is on the house. Consider it paid."

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That's what *logizomai* is. As far as the restaurant was concerned, my bill was paid for. As for me, I could simply enjoy my rice pudding with a sense of deep gratitude and joy.

That's what Paul wanted the Jewish Christians in Rome to understand. God, *logizomai*-ed their sins. Their sins were totally paid for. By faith in Jesus Christ, forgiveness and grace was "on the house." Abraham, the greatest patriarch, understood that. And so did Israel's greatest King, David. (cf. 4:6-8)

The Jewish Roman believers wrongly believed that salvation was contingent upon circumcision. Salvation, Paul argued, was *never* dependent upon circumcision.

"Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after [i.e. Abraham] was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!

In other words, their revered patriarch Abraham was saved while in the same condition as Gentiles: uncircumcised. Then why was he circumcised? Circumcision was merely a sign, a seal which testified to God's grace given to him prior to his circumcision.

"And [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. (4:10-11)

In the Greek, the word "seal" (Gk: *sphragis*) is the same word for the legal seal impressed by an emperor with a signet ring. In other words, Abraham, David and all God's people were never saved by circumcision. Circumcision was simply an infallible legal declaration of the grace God had given prior to their circumcision.

Romans 4 is a wonderful example of Paul's skillful dealing with the circumcision issue. Paul simply explained that circumcision's only function was to be an after-the-fact seal that God's grace had already worked in the hearts of the one circumcised. With respect to salvation, circumcision meant—and effected—nothing.

Since circumcision is nothing more than a "seal," then all people—Jews, Gentiles, males and females (who could not be circumcised)—were all equal. All are saved the same way: not by obedience to the Law but only by faith.

Because Abraham believed and it was reckoned as faith, he is the father of all who believe, whether circumcised or uncircumcised.

"And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." (4:12)

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Abraham and his offspring were not saved by observing the Law, specifically that requiring circumcision. Instead, Paul wrote, that came “through the righteousness that comes by faith.” (4:12)

In 4:13ff., Paul then went on to describe the real purpose and function of the Law. The Law did not save.

“[For if] those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise [of circumcision] is worthless.” (4:14)

Abraham, the “Father of many nations” was the blueprint for salvation by faith. Abraham had faith and believed. God ordained that this be the pattern of faith for all Abraham’s offspring. “So shall your offspring be,” God told Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:5).

Thus, Abraham is the Father of all nations, not just Israel. Abraham is the forefather of all those, whose faith was credited (cf. *logizomai*) to them as righteousness—whether circumcised or not.

What does this mean for you and me? We are all the true sons of Abraham. Male or female, Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised...none of this matters. God’s grace is yours. Through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, your salvation is truly...”on the house!”

**Prayer:**

Father Abraham had many sons  
Many sons had Father Abraham  
I am one of them and so are you.  
So let’s all praise the Lord! Amen.

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