

# Romans 4 God Counts Faith in His Promises As a Righteous Act

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**Rom 4:1** What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

**Rom 4:2** For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

Paul uses Abraham to prove further that no man is justified by works

If the Friend of the Eternal Judge could not be justified by his personal worth—

If Abraham needed grace to be justified—What about you?

**A. All are guilty—Paul already has twice shut the “boasting door”**

**Rom 3:19** ...that every mouth may be stopped...

**Rom 3:27** Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

**B. “But not before God”—Agreeable with James teachings**

**Jas 2:21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works...

**Jas 2:24** Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Paul spoke of justification as you stand before the Eternal Judge

—James speaks of justification as you are judged by men

Paul denounced works as the cause of justification

—James spoke of works as the effects and evidences of faith

Paul reprimanded the self-righteous who trusted in their own works for justification

—James reprimanded the unrighteous who neglected the performance of good works

**Rom 4:3** For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

So which is counted as right? —To believe in self? —Or to believe in God?

Paul’s whole point is to set justification by works in opposition to justification by grace

Some make Abraham’s act of believing as a substitute for complete obedience

But this disagrees with the whole spirit and letter of what Paul is teaching

The act of believing is as much a work as any other commanded duty

**Joh 6:28** ...What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

**Joh 6:29** Jesus answered and said unto them, 0This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

**1Th 1:3** Remembering without ceasing your work of faith...

Faith was as much Abraham’s own act as any act of obedience to the law

Therefore the meaning cannot possibly be—

That the mere act of believing was counted to Abraham for **all** obedience

Abraham’s act of believing was not his meritorious ground for eternal acceptance

Belief is not some third choice of salvation—In addition to works or grace

Eternal justification cannot be based in man’s works (including the ‘work of faith’)

The merit by which justification is obtained is the work of Jesus Christ

Only by Jesus’ work can God treat as righteous those who are in themselves ungodly

Eternal justification before God is not of man—It is a free gift of God by grace

**A. What saith the scripture?**

**Gen 15:5** 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.

**Gen 15:6** And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

**B. Genesis 15:6 was not the origin of Abraham's faith—Nor of his spiritual life**

**Gen 12:4** So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him...

**Heb 11:8** By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

**Gen 12:8** ...there he builded an altar...and called upon the name of the LORD.

**C. Abraham was not always as faithful as at the moment of Genesis 15:6**

**Gen 12:4** So Abram departed...and Lot went with him:

**Gen 12:13** Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister: that it may be well with me...

**Gen 16:3** Abram's wife took Hagar...and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

**Gen 20:2** And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She *is* my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

**D. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness**

Abraham believed in that which seemed impossible for even God to do

Abraham's belief is not what made God do what God had promised to do

God was going to do it all the way along—That is why He promised

God would have brought the seed whether Abraham believed it or not

Yet it was right for Abraham to believe that God could and would do it

Belief in God's promises gives God honor—It is right to give God honor

Belief in God's promises gives us peace—We are blessed if we have peace

**E. "Counted unto him" (to either set down on the credit or debit side of the ledger)**

The ledger is not what gets you to heaven—The ledger sends you to hell

Books that contain your recorded works do not get you to heaven—

The Lamb's Book of Life gets you to heaven—God's grace gets you to heaven

The ledger of your works does not justify you in God's courtroom—

The ledger would condemn you

Jesus' blood blots out your works in the ledger

God's grace (not your works) justified you in God's courtroom

Yet in spite of all these truths—It seems that God keeps a ledger concerning our faith

God counted Abraham's belief in God's promise as an act of righteousness

God set this act of belief down on the credit side of Abraham's ledger

It is to our credit that we believe God's promises

Our faith in God's promises honors God—And it is right to honor God

Our faith in God's promises gives us peace—We are blessed if we have peace

**Rom 4:4** Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

**Rom 4:5** But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

**Summation: Two choices—Works—Or grace—Grace is counted as right**

**By definition: Works and grace cannot at the same time describe the same thing**

**Rom 11:6** And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

**By our works we fall short—Justification before God must be by grace**

**Rom 3:23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

**Rom 3:24** Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

The first man works—He deserves to be rewarded—Somebody is indebted to pay him

The second man does no work—He just believes that God justifies the ungodly by grace

In a works system a reward is set down on the credit side of the ledger

In a grace system God justifies the ungodly—In spite of his works

Yet even though the grace system is not in any way based on works

God still sets belief in the grace system down on the credit side of the ledger

It is right to believe in God for justification—as opposed to believing in self

As God counted it right for Abraham to believe in God's promise—  
Even so God counts it right for this man to believe in God's promise

**Rom 4:6** Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

**Rom 4:7** *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

**Rom 4:8** *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

**Grace as opposed to works—God counted David righteous in spite of his works**

**Psa 32:1** *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

**Psa 32:2** *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

**Psa 103:12** *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

**Isa 38:17** *...for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

**Mic 7:19** *...thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

**Jer 50:20** *In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.*

**Isa 43:25** *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

**Heb 10:17** *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

**An eternal righteousness of God imputed to His children by grace through Christ**

**An eternal righteousness that God sets down on the credit side of the ledger**

**A righteousness of God that not of man's works—not under the law**

**Rom 3:21** *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*

**2Co 5:21** *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**Isa 61:10** *...he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness...*

**Psa 85:2** *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.*

**Rom 5:19** *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

**Blessed (happy) is the man whose sins are not set down in the ledger against him**

**Rom 4:8** *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute (set down on the debit side of the ledger) sin.*

**Rom 4:9** *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

**Rom 4:10** *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

As blessedness (happiness) came upon David when he believed in grace—

Even so happiness comes on others who believe in grace

Is this happiness only for those who are circumcised?

While Abraham was still uncircumcised, God counted it right that he believed in God

God counts it right for you to believe in grace whether circumcised or not

Believing in grace makes you happy—Whoever you are

**Rom 4:11** *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

God gave to Abraham the commandment of circumcision (13 to 14 years later)

It was a "sign" or token of the covenant God made with Abraham and his natural seed

That "sign" was a badge that distinguished Abraham and his children from other people

Yet since Abraham believed without the "sign"—

He is also father to those who believe without the "sign"

With or without the "sign"—It is right to believe in God's promises

**Rom 4:12** *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel (Romans 9:6)

Abraham is the true father of circumcision—Not to those who have the "sign" only

But to those who are circumcised in the heart—And believe as Abraham believed

**Rom 4:13** For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

God's promise that His people will inherit the world will come to pass  
God's keeping His promise does not hinge on our keeping God's law  
God's keeping His promise does not hinge on our believing His promise  
God's promise is eternally real—Even if we never keep any law or ever believe in it  
Yet God's promise becomes real to God's people when they believe it  
"The world" surely means both this world and that which is to come  
Christ is heir of all things—We are joint heirs with Him  
We enjoy an earnest of the inheritance now—We have promise of the world to come  
Even the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, never fading, and reserved in heaven  
This large and comprehensive promise takes in the things of time and eternity  
"...the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8)  
We enjoy a blessing in what we now have—even a kingdom of heaven at hand  
We have a title to that which is to come—even heavenly glory

**Rom 4:14** For if they which are of the law *be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

If keeping the law makes heirs—Then God's promise is pointless  
If salvation is by works—There was no reason for God to make a promise  
If works is the basis—What is there for men to believe in, but themselves?  
If it be of works—It cannot be of promise—If it be of works—It cannot be by grace

**Rom 4:15** Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is no transgression.*

The law curses and condemns sinners—The law demands God's wrath upon the sinner  
The law does not declare righteousness—The law defines righteousness  
The law can never justify—The law proves guilt—The law proves transgression

**Rom 4:16** 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,*

By the grace of God faith is given to God's children—Faith is a gift of God (Eph 2:9)  
By the grace of the gift of faith—We can know the promise of justification by grace  
Faith by grace leads to an end—a sureness of the promise (to us)  
Faith makes the promise sure not only to those of the law—the Jews  
Faith makes God's promise sure to any who have like faith with Abraham

**Rom 4:17** (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.*

Oh! The glory of God who can give life to the dead!  
God quickened both the dead body of Abraham and also Sarah's womb  
God quickens those who were dead in trespasses and sins (only God can do that)  
God will quicken the dead bodies of men at the last day (only God can do that)  
God called Abraham the father of many nations—When as yet he was not such  
God called the Gentiles his seed and offspring—When as yet they were not such  
God calls those who were "things which are not"—And makes them things which are

**Rom 4:18** 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.*

**Rom 4:19** 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:

**Rom 4:20** He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

**Rom 4:21** And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

**Rom 4:22** And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Against all usual ground for hope—Abraham believed in the certain hope that is of God  
Leaning against the certainty of hope itself—He believed in that hope  
God set it down as credit on Abraham's ledger when he believed God's promises  
The God-given gift of strong faith in God's promises glorifies God

**Rom 4:23** Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

**Rom 4:24** But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

God sets it down as a credit on our ledger when we believe His promises  
Our faith in God honors God—God counts it right to honor God  
Belief that God raised Jesus from the dead honors God

Belief that Jesus totally accomplished salvation in Jesus' death honors Jesus  
God counts it right for you to totally believe only in Jesus for salvation  
God does not count it right for you to believe in anything of you for salvation  
Faith in works (or faith in faith) honors man—Faith in grace honors God  
God counts it right to honor God

**Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**

**The promise that we are to believe in is two part:**

- 1) **That Jesus was delivered for (because of) our sins**
- 2) **That Jesus was raised for (because of) our justification**

**1) Christ was delivered for (because of) our offenses**

Christ was delivered to death—Not for His own offences—For he committed none  
Nor for the sins of all men—Since all will not be saved—But for the sins of His people  
Christ was delivered to make reconciliation and satisfaction for His peoples' offenses

**2) Christ was raised again for (because of) our justification**

Christ died in the room and stead of His people—His dying satisfied God  
Being satisfied God raised Christ from the dead  
Christ's resurrection did not procure the justification of His people—  
That was done by his suffering and death  
Christ's resurrection was for the "testification" of the justification of His people  
By His resurrection it now fully appears that sin was atoned for  
By His resurrection it is fully proclaimed that we are justified

**Christ was delivered because of our offenses and raised because of our justification**

This promise is true—Whether we believe it or not  
I remind you that believing in God's promise does not make it come to pass  
Yet believing in God's promises must be important  
Paul spent a whole chapter saying: 'God counts it right to believe in His promises'  
Believing in God's promises honors the God who will keep His promises

In addition, faith in God's promise gives peace to the one who believes the promise

There is a 'blessedness' (happiness) in believing in God's promise  
God's promise is: "Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification"  
This promise is true whether we believe it or not  
Our faith in the promise does not make it true  
Our faith in the promise does not make us righteous  
Our faith in the promise lets us know that Christ made us righteous  
By faith in God's promise we see as real what God already knows is real  
By faith in God's promise we see ourselves as ones died for and justified  
As we see ourselves in light of what Jesus did for us—  
We are justified by faith (in our own minds)—  
And we have peace with God

**Rom 5:1** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: