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PROOF OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE: ABRAHAM

Romans 4:1-12

Introduction: Review of Paul's Argument

I. Abraham's Life Shows that Justification by Faith Alone Isn't New (v.1)

- A. Abraham was the "forefather" (v.1) of the Jews
- B. God's People are saved in the OT in the same way they are saved in the NT
 - o What other NT passages mention Abraham being saved by faith?
 - o This shows there is much continuity between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant—both are part of the one *Covenant of Grace*

II. Abraham's Life Shows that Justification by Works Cannot be True (v. 2, 4)

- A. Some Jews believed that God chose Abraham because of his good works
 - o The book of Jubilees (a Jewish work before the time of Jesus) said: "Abraham was perfect in his deeds with the Lord and well pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life."
- B. Paul shows how absurd it would be to think that Abraham was saved by works
 - o If we are saved by works, says Paul, then we can boast before God! (v.2)
 - o If we are saved by works, says Paul, then salvation is like "wages" (v.4) They are "not counted as a gift but as his due" (v.4)
 - o What would our worship and prayer life look like if we really believed in salvation by works?

III. Abraham's Life Shows that a Righteous Status Comes Only Through Faith (v.3, 5-12)

- A. Abraham's Faith led to his righteous status before God (v.3, 5)
 - o Paul quotes Gen 15:6: "Abraham believed God and it was *credited to him as righteousness.*" (v.3)
 - o Paul also says that "his faith is *counted as righteousness*" (v.5)



** This doesn't mean that Abraham's faith is a meritorious act by which God rewards him with salvation; it means that faith is the *instrument* by which he gets a righteous status.

B. Abraham's Experience was the Same as David's (v.7-8)

- o Paul cites Psalm 32:1-2. How does this passage refute the idea of boasting in our good works?
- o If God will not "count" our sins against us (v.8), then who are they counted to?

C. Abraham was Justified by Faith *Before* his circumcision (v.9-12)

- o Paul reminds us that circumcision was never a means of being saved anyway; instead it was "a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith" (v.11)
- o Why is this so important? Because it allows Abraham to be "the father of all who believe" (v.11), both Jew and Gentile

**The promises given to Abraham always had to do with the gospel going to all nations!



Discussion Groups

1. How does Paul's choice of Abraham as the example of justification by faith affect the way you view the Old Testament?

2. Do you tend to think of salvation as "wage" or as a "gift"? How does the story of Abraham transform the way you think of boasting before God?

3. How does Paul's discussion of circumcision affect your view of your baptism? What are some ways that baptism is typically misunderstood?

