

IV

Justification of the Wicked

ROMANS 4:1–8

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

READ | ROMANS 4:1–8

THINK ABOUT

From Romans 3, we know that all people are sinners and deserve God's wrath or punishment. God is holy and has been offended by the wickedness of each person. So how could anyone escape eternal separation from God?

Consider Abraham and David. Instead of their sins being held against them, both men were accepted by God. Before Jesus' death and resurrection, God provided a means for people to know Him and walk with Him in anticipation of Christ's coming. They did not earn God's acceptance; that would be impossible. Rather, they believed God's promises. They loved God and trusted Him. That's genuine faith.

APPLY

When Jesus took on human flesh, God made Himself and His plan fully known. Jesus paid the debt of our sin and made it possible for our names to be cleared. The wicked can be justified before God, but there is only One Way. Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. If anyone places his trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, he can receive the promise of forgiveness and the righteousness of Christ.

“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). It's beyond human comprehension that God would accept any of us. “Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift” 2 Corinthians 9:15.

ASK

Have you placed your trust in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection? How do you know?

What would you say to someone who is counting on their good works to get them into heaven?

THE BIG IDEA

Paul now demonstrates how justification relates to the history of the Jews. Beginning with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, Paul explains how this patriarch was justified by faith, not works.

KEY POINTS

Abraham is justified by faith alone (vv. 1–3).

An illustration is given about the nature and extent of wages versus gifts (vv. 4–5).

Look at David's example of righteousness apart from works (vv. 6–8).

LIFE APPLICATION

Justification is a singular event, not a process. It is not to be confused with the process of **sanctification**.

No person can be justified by works—only by faith in Christ.

DISCUSSION

What are some implications of someone being justified by works?

How can we reconcile Paul and James' justification by faith and works respectively?

How could Abraham be saved by the same faith with which we are saved today?

“JUSTIFICATION OF THE WICKED”

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