

# ROMANS - #4

## ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

### LESSON TOPIC

## ABRAHAM: FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

### SCRIPTURE TEXT: ROMANS 4:1-25

MEMORY VERSE: 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.

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues Paul's teaching on the pre-eminence of "faith" as opposed to the "works" of the law. In this case works are defined by the rite of circumcision, which was given to Abraham as a seal of the covenant God had given him. Paul has not left the message of the previous three chapters, but is enlarging on the direction of those subjects. He has emphasized that both Jew and Gentile are under sin and its curse. He has emphasized also that justification from sin does not come from the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the theme he continues in chapter four.

### DAILY SCRIPTURES AND THOUGHTS

MONDAY. ROM. 4:1-8. ABRAHAM'S RIGHTEOUSNESS WAS BY FAITH.

#### SCRIPTURE.

V1. 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. 6. 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. 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

#### COMMENTS.

Abraham was counted as a righteous man, not because he was circumcised, but because before he ever received circumcision, he believed the promise of God for his life; the promise which told him that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Everything God had told Abraham to

do and all the complete promise God made to him and the inheritance which God promised him, he believed and obeyed. His faith was not just some mental acknowledgement of the idea that God would one day send a Savior to the world. Instead it was a faith upon which he acted by way of leaving his former home and all that pertained to it, and journeyed (with God) to a land which God would show him. He did not receive the promise (of Isaac) by some works he performed but by believing that God would bring it to pass even after he was too old to accomplish it himself. But do not forget, however, that Abraham's faith in God did have works in it or it would have never been fulfilled. An example of this is that he took Isaac and proceeded to offer him as a sacrifice, even when he knew that it was through him that God would accomplish the ultimate of his promise.

#### TUESDAY. ROM. 4: 9-12. CIRCUMCISION HAS NO REDEMPTIVE QUALITY.

##### SCRIPTURE.

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the un-circumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in un-circumcision? Not in circumcision, but in un-circumcision. 11. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being un-circumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised: that righteousness might be imputed unto them also. 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 un-circumcised.

##### COMMENTS.

The righteousness which was imputed unto Abraham did not come by his being circumcised but by his believing in the promise of God. Abraham received this promise, by which he believed, before he received the seal of circumcision. Thus it was not circumcision that made Abraham a righteous man. No work of the flesh could have any redeeming capacity in it. Thus to be circumcised in the flesh had no power to change the human, sinful nature which Abraham, like all others, had received from Adam. Believing and obeying the promise of God did. Not because Abraham believed some set of rules but because the promise from God which constituted the basis for his faith was able to lead him out of his sins and into the righteousness of God. The Jews, like much of the church world today, were trying to attach righteousness to some nominal, outward deed of the flesh. Likewise the church is consumed with applying a simplistic function of believing in something which has no saving value to it. Faith is of value only if it is given of God, through his word, and is believed and practiced. Then it has a redeeming value and is imputed unto us for righteousness.

#### WEDNESDAY. ROM. 4: 13-16. HEIRS THROUGH FAITH.

##### SCRIPTURES.

V13. 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. 14. For if they which are of the law be heirs,

faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 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.

#### COMMENTS.

The promise unto Abraham that he would become the heir of the world was not a promise that derived from some principal of the law. The law makes no such promise. Instead the promise was given purely on the basis of Abraham believing and obeying its inherent requirements. If it had been possible to obtain the inheritance through obedience to the precepts of the law, then there would be no such thing as "faith"; the very concept would have been invalid. The capacity of the law is limited to pointing out the limitations, weakness and failures of human flesh. If there were no "law" then nothing would have been considered as a transgression.

So the inheritance had to be offered through believing the promise of an eternal inheritance. Thus it is dependent upon God's grace (graciousness) in order for there to be an inheritance offered. The law could not do it and without God's grace in offering such promise, there could have been no faith in which to believe and thereby have righteousness imputed.

#### THURSDAY. ROM. 4: 17-21. ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN THE HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE.

#### SCRIPTURES.

V17. (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.

#### COMMENTS.

At the age of one hundred years, with Sarah at age ninety, there was no chance at all of them having any biological, physical child by which the promise made of God unto him twenty five years before could be a reality. The only possibility was that both of them, in effect, be raised from the dead. This would be necessary in order for a child with all the capacities of the flesh might be produced by them. And Abraham believed God's promise, not staggering in unbelief, that what he had spoken he would fulfill. There is more here than just the pro-creation of a child by Abraham and Sarah. What is really involved is a resurrection. Notice in the text that Abraham was not in unbelief because of the "deadness" of his own body as also that of Sarah's. This "deadness" demands a quickening or a resurrection. Thus, in this great miracle promised to Abraham is contained the seed of the resurrection. This same seed of a resurrection was demonstrated when Abraham was about to

sacrifice Isaac unto the Lord and God provided a ram instead. This event is directly applicable to the resurrection as is seen in Heb. 11:19, where it states that Abraham believed that God was “able to raise him up, even from the dead, “from whence also he received him in a figure”. That is, figuratively speaking, Abraham received Isaac from the dead.

**FRIDAY. ROM. 4:22-25. “IN ABRAHAM” WE TOO WERE INCLUDED IN THE HOPE OF A RESURRECTION.**

#### **SCRIPTURES.**

V22. 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.

#### **COMMENTS.**

There are two main thoughts in these verses. First, they inform us that the hope of the promise which Abraham believed in and for which righteousness was imputed unto him, were not for him alone. But we also, by believing in the same promise with the same hope, will have righteousness imputed unto us unto everlasting life. Secondly, these verses again link this promise, faith and hope, directly to the resurrection. The simple truth is that without the ultimate resurrection of “the dead in Christ”, the faith and hope of Abraham, and by extension us, is totally void and worthless, even more so than the law. People have trouble, theologically, of looking beyond the day of Abraham and the gift of Isaac and applying it all to the day of Christ and its benefit and application to our own lives. That was its entire purpose and meaning, without which it had no value to the human family. The fact that Abraham was famous, good, faithful and also the fact that God gave him a miraculous child, has merit and hope only within the frame work of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, by which we too have hope of exactly the same. Paul will emphasize that more strongly in the sixth chapter.

#### **SUMMARY**

The Jews in Paul’s day as well as those of all history were very proud of their Abrahamic heritage, and there is nothing wrong with that in itself. Their failure was that they came to see the law as an end in itself and not just a means to an end. Also, they failed to be able to see that Abraham’s faith was the basis for his greatness and hope while they put all of their confidence in the structure of the law.

This chapter is therefore a treatise by Paul that Abraham had his great standing with God as well as in history, because of his great faith in God’s promise, not just of a miraculous child, but beyond that in the meaning and purpose of that child. That purpose was Christ and the resurrection, not just of Christ, but also of all who believed in Christ. That was the cornerstone of Abraham’s faith and it is still the cornerstone of the Christian faith today. Not just the resurrection of Christ, but also the resurrection of all who believe in Christ according to the scriptures. That is the Christian faith; it was also Abraham’s faith. That is the Christian hope; it was also Abraham’s hope.

The law could not do that, nor could it impart hope of an eternal inheritance. The world of Gentiles with all of their religions could not do that. A resurrection, as the hope of the Christian, is an exclusive right, imputed only to those who, by faith in Christ have obeyed his call, and, like Abraham, left his family, his country and all he knew as this earthly life, to follow God into a “land which he would show him”.

#### QUESTIONS

1. What was the substance of Abraham’s faith?
2. How did his call and acceptance demonstrate that faith?
3. Why was it not possible for a perfect obedience to the law to save someone?
4. Why were the Jews unable to see the faith which Abraham believed?
5. Using Abraham’s life and communion with God, what were the basic doctrines of Abraham’s faith?