

## Studies in Romans 1 - 8 (4)

**Reading: Study 4 – Romans 3 v 19b – 4 v 5, 9, 13, 16**

In the first section of Romans (1 v 18 – 3 v 20) Paul deals with man's need and the universality of sin. He proves that all men are guilty, without excuse, condemned and deserving of God's judgement. Man is helpless and hopeless, a bleak and desperate situation. However, at 3 v 21 Paul shines a bright light into the darkness "*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested*". This is the beginning of the second section of the doctrinal part of the letter (3 v 21 – 5 v 21) and Paul explains God's provision, God's answer to man's need – Salvation. This is 'God's method for making bad men good'.

**3 v 21 – 31 The Righteousness of God Declared:** v26 "*To declare ... his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus*"

**4 v 1 v 25 The Righteousness of God Illustrated:** v3 "*Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*"

**4 v 1 – 8 Righteousness Apart from Works:** v6b "*God imputeth righteousness without works*".

**4 v 9 – 12 Righteousness Apart from Circumcision:** v11b "*though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also*".

**4 v 13 – 17 Righteousness Apart from Law:** v13 "*not ... through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*"

**4 v 18 – 25 The Example of Abraham:** v22 "*was strong in faith ...and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*" (See study 5)

### **3 v 21 – 31 The Righteousness of God Declared**

The gospel Paul preached is 'Justification by Faith alone'. The gospel of Christ (see 1 v 16, 17) makes known the righteousness of God without the law v22 "*which is by faith of Jesus Christ*". This truth is not in conflict with the Old Testament scriptures for v21 "*being witnessed by the law and the prophets*". The righteousness of God, the quality of being right, is a divine attribute e.g. v26. It also describes the righteousness which God reckons to all that believe e.g. v22. This great provision is universal and all can benefit from it v22 "*unto all and upon all them that believe*". All are candidates to receive God's provision for "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*". All men are made in the image of God, but all fall short of the standard required i.e. displaying the moral glory of God.

At v24 Paul brings in the idea of "*being justified freely*". Justified means that God, the righteous judge, acquits from guilt the sinner and pronounces him righteous. How can this be? How can the statements in v26 "*that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*", be reconciled? The answer is "*faith in Jesus Christ*". Another truth is mentioned at v25 "*to be a propitiation*". This has the idea of an expiatory sacrifice – a sacrifice that makes amends. With the sacrifice God is satisfied and reckons as righteous the offerer i.e. justifies the sinner.

In the closing verses of the chapter Paul teaches that all boasting is excluded and concludes v28 "*a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*" Faith in Jesus Christ can be common to all men, both Jew and Gentile. On the basis of what has been taught an obvious question is raised at v31, is the law superfluous, abolished, ineffective? "*God forbid*", let it not be, says Paul rather as believers "*we establish (uphold) the law.*"

### **4 v 1 – 25 Righteousness of God Illustrated**

Chapter 4 begins with a familiar phrase in the Romans "*What shall we say then?*" (see also e.g. 6 v 1 and 7 v 7). Paul again anticipates a question, an objection (cf 3 v 1 – 9). He has been

teaching justification by faith alone, but what about Abraham, the forefather of the nation? What was his experience? Did Abraham know the blessedness of justification by works? By circumcision? By law? Or by faith? Paul will show conclusively that it was Abraham's faith that was v22 *"imputed to him for righteousness."*

#### **4 v 1 – 8 Righteousness Apart from Works**

Paul has already shown in 3 v 27 that boasting is excluded and points out in v2 that *"if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory"*. To answer the question about Abraham and works he turns to the final and infallible court of appeal v3 *"what saith the scriptures?"* The scriptures had been entrusted to the Jews (see 3 v 2) and these scriptures are clear v3 *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness"* (see Gen 15 v 6).

In v4, 5 Paul describes the difference between works and faith. If justification is by works, then this is reckoned by debt, justification is earned and deserved. However, if justification comes by believing, it is by grace. Abraham's experience was justified by faith.

Paul then cites further evidence, this time from the experience of David. David wrote in Psalm 32 of *"the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."* In this Psalm David remembers his experience after being confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan (11 Sam 12). No one could ever think that David was justified by works.

#### **4 v 9 – 12 Righteousness Apart from Circumcision**

If the blessedness of 'sins forgiven' was known by Abraham, the father of circumcision (v12), the question raised in v9 is *"Cometh this blessedness upon the circumcision only?"* Paul has already proved that the problem of sin is universal; that both Jew and Gentile are guilty in the sight of God. He has also already stated that the provision of God, salvation, is for Jew and Gentile (see 3 v 28, 29). He now demonstrates this truth from the experience of the father of circumcision.

The Genesis record is clear; Abraham was justified v10 *"Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."* Circumcision came after justification; it was a sign of what had taken place, an external witness of the covenant between God and Abraham – Gen 17 v 11 *"it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."* As a result of righteousness being reckoned before circumcision v11 *"he might be the father of all them that believe"*.

#### **4 v 13 – 17 Righteousness Apart from Law**

The law was another of the God given privileges of the Jew. The law, like circumcision and their works, the Jews boasted in and trusted. In these verses Paul shows that in the righteousness of God, law has no part; it is faith and faith alone. In v13 Paul states that the promises to Abraham was not *"through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."* The law of Sinai was not given until 430 years later (see Gal 3 v 17). In v14 Paul explains that if the law plays a part, if obeying the law made an *"heir of the world"*, then faith is void or empty. Not only this, but as the promise is linked to faith then the promise means nothing cf Gal 3 v 17 *"the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law ... cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."*

*"Law worketh wrath"* says v15, it brings men into condemnation. The law sets a standard, it gives a guide to men and none can reach it's standard. Without the law there are no precepts to break, no standard to fall short of, no clear guidance of right and wrong. The purpose of the law Gal 3 v 24 *"the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"*. Paul concludes again v16 *"it is of faith"* and this faith makes Abraham *"the father of us all"*.