

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

FATHER OF THE FAITH

Av 8, 5774; Aug 4, 2014

Lesson Four; Romans 4

Jewish Community in Rome

- Jews:
 - Jews: Jewish by birth
 - Proselytes: Jewish by legal conversion
- Gentiles:
 - Idolaters: Under Roman law, illegal not to worship gods
 - God-fearers: Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel

The Argument

Paul teaches that God-fearing Gentiles need not and should not undergo conversion to become Jewish. The believing community in Rome believes that God-fearing Gentiles should undergo conversion.

Paul's Terms for Jewish Status

- Jewish: legal member of nation of Israel
- Circumcision: A proselyte or proselytizer
- In the Law: Jewish or proselyte
- Under the Law: Jewish or proselyte
- Works of the Law: Distinctive signs of Jewish identity (i.e. conversion, circumcision, identity marking commandments)
- Works: "Short for Works of the Law"

A False Premise:

Do We Overthrow the Torah?

^{3:28} For we [apostles who proclaim my Gospel] hold that one is justified by faith [in/of Yeshua] apart from [becoming Jewish through the] works of the law.

²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

³⁰ since God is one--who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith [in/of Yeshua].

³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith [in/of Yeshua]? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Another False Premise:

Forefather According to the Flesh?

Romans 4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh [i.e. physically]?

"What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?" (Lloyd Gaston)

² For if Abraham was justified [and declared innocent and righteous in the heavenly court] by works [of the law, namely the disincentive signs of Jewish identity, such as circumcision], he has something to boast about [because he obtained his righteousness through ceremonial acts that he performed], but [in reality, Abraham had nothing to boast about,] not before God.

Abraham Believed God

³ For what does the Scripture say [in Genesis 15:6]? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted (chashav) to him as righteousness."

⁴ Now to the one who works [by undertaking conversion to obtain Jewish status because he believes that will earn his justification before God], his wages [of becoming Jewish and therefore justified] are not counted as a gift [on the basis of favor] but as his due.

The Efficacy of Faith

⁵ And to the one who does not work [to obtain Jewish status] but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is "counted as righteousness,"

⁶ just as David also speaks [in Psalm 32:1] of the blessing [asher] 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 (chashav) his sin."

Abraham Counted Righteous before Circumcision

⁹ Is this blessing [asher] then only for the circumcised [Jews and proselytes], or also for the uncircumcised [God-fearing Gentiles]? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.

¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after [Abraham's circumcision], but before he was circumcised [that God counted his faith as righteousness].

¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he [already] had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose [for receiving circumcision only after he was already counted righteous] was to make him the father of all [the God-fearing Gentiles] who believe without being

circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,

¹² and to make him the father of the [*the Jewish people who are*] circumcised [*and*] who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

And the father of the circumcision; father not only to those of the circumcision but also to those who follow in the footsteps of the trust our father Abraham had in a state of uncircumcision. (Lloyd Gaston)

The Promise

¹³ For the promise [*in Genesis 12:3 and 22:17, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice," was given*] to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world [*but this promise*] did not come through the law [*at Sinai or through legal conversion to be Jewish*] but through the righteousness [*counted to him because*] of faith.

¹⁴ For if it is [*merely the Jewish people,*] the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null [*because it requires no faith to become legally Jewish*] and the promise [*to bless all nations*] is void.

¹⁵ For the law brings wrath [*upon the Jewish people because they have specific additional obligations to the covenant and specific punishments and curses for disobedience to those obligations*], but where there is no [*specific*] law [*incumbent upon a person*] there is no transgression [*or punishment*].

¹⁶ That is why it [*i.e. the promise*] depends on faith [*rather than being Jewish*], in order that the promise may rest on grace [*and favor*] and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the [*Jew or proselyte, the*] adherent of the law but also to the one who [*merely*] shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

¹⁷ as it is written [*in Genesis 17:5*], "I have made you the father of many nations"—[*the promise was guaranteed to all his offspring*] in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

As Good as Dead

¹⁸ In hope he believed against [*any reasonable*] hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told [*in Genesis 15:5*], "So shall your offspring be."

¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

He used to say: "One five years old should study Scripture; ten years--Mishnah; thirteen years—a son of the commandments; fifteen years old-- study Gemara; eighteen years old--the bridal canopy; at twenty—pursuit of career; at thirty--strength; at forty--discernment; at fifty--counsel; at sixty--age; at seventy--hoariness; at eighty--power; at ninety--decrepitude; at one hundred--it is as though he were dead and gone and had ceased from the world." (m.Avot 5:31)

Fully Convinced

²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone,

²⁴ but for ours also. It will [*also*] be counted to us [*both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles*] who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.