

Musing #49 – Romans 4:11-25

We ended Musing 48 with the reality that God had counted Abraham righteous and acceptable well before he was circumcised and called for God's purpose. In fact God made it clear that circumcision was merely an outward sign that Abraham's faith was centered in a trusting heart toward God.

Paul addressed this earlier in his letter to the Romans (see the end of Musing #45). **Romans 2:28-29** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Faith was the issue long before Moses and the Law

An early example is Abraham—Part II

11 Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith. And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

The ritual of circumcision did not have any saving value. Abraham was God's friend for 13 or 14 years before he was circumcised. Before he even became a Jew! Paul is rockin' the Jews world now by telling them the Gentiles needn't come to Jewish circumcision. He's telling them, you Jews must come to the Gentile's faith. 'Ya think there weren't some angry Jews around there about this time?'

Faith then, is of the heart, our deepest held beliefs. Not what we intellectually come to or "could be"—or our family heritage, and certainly not our denomination, or church.

13 Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!

Abraham received the promise of righteousness 430 years before the law was ever given to Moses, so his righteousness couldn't have come from his obedience to the law.

Abraham's experience with God gave him the ability to trust God. Where works enter in, grace becomes void. Man still tends to say... "behold my good works." God continues to say... "behold my Son!"

Paul is telling them that the law was a measure to show all men they are sinners!

Romans 5:13 Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.

Galatians 3:10-14 Select—...no one is justified by the law in the sight of God, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

“...the law is not of faith” Romans 14:23 says: **“Whatever is not from faith is sin.”**

The law merely demonstrates our fallen, sinful nature, which is contrary to God’s ways. The law assures us that we will reap what we sow.

C.S. Lewis said... **“There are two kinds of people in the world, those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done’ and those to whom God says, ‘Thy will be done.’ Self-righteousness has never worked because righteousness is a five-letter word spelled - F A I T H.”**

Of course, we know that long after the birth of Isaac the Lord had another test of Abraham’s faith.

Genesis 22:2 “Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.” When Isaac, who was no fool asked, “Hey dad, where is the lamb for this sacrifice...” Abraham told him, **Genesis 22:8 “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.** We can see why God allowed Abraham to have His gift of righteousness.

Webster’s dictionary defines righteousness as, **“...when a person’s actions are justified, and have the connotation that the person has been “judged” or “reckoned” as leading a life that is pleasing to God.”**

16 So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham’s. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.” This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.

Abraham believed God **“would do.”** We only have to believe that God **“has done.”**

Sarah died at the age of 127. Abraham was now 136. He then married Keturi and they had 6 more children (Abraham apparently discovered Viagra).

The promise was lodged in Abraham. The conditions were fulfilled in Christ. The blessings are ours by faith.

23 And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

All of this happened 2,000 years before Christ. It has always been about faith. All of this so God could forgive us our sins and give us Life from above. Christ is the only way. No man comes to the Father except through Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

We look at Abraham and think, that was "exceptional!" Paul says no, it was always about faith. Just a mustard seed of faith, in a very big God.

This is the greatest secret in life. We have God's favor available to each of us. We can't earn it. It's ours through Christ! Nothing can set us more free than that. When Jesus was asked, "**What are we to do, so that we may accomplish the works of God?**" **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." —John 6:28-29.** Believe in Him. It's all about faith.

That alone is the foundation for our personal sense of worth & value. We are children of the living, creator Spirit-God, who put His righteous life in a man, who gave that life on a cross as payment for our sins.

Our worth and value should never come from other people. Our significance comes from who we are. God's chosen children. As God's children we must learn to reject basing our identity on the lies of the world system we live in, such as...

#1 - I must meet certain standards to feel good about myself.

- Put away our fears of failure and manipulation of others — Romans 5:1

#2 - I must be approved by certain others to feel good about myself.

- Put away our fear of failure — Colossians 1:21-22

#3 - I am unworthy of love and deserve to be rejected and punished.

- Put away our fear of rejection and snubbing by others — 1 John 4:9-10

#4 - I am what I am. I cannot change. I am hopeless.

- Put away shame, inferiority, and hostile behavior patterns. — Philippians 4:13

We have the only standing that will ever count—our standing before God.

1 Corinthians 3:22-23 "He has given you the whole world to use, and life and even death are your servants. He has given you all of the present and all of the future. All are yours, and you belong to Christ, and Christ is God's."

That is the good news!