



Chapter Four

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER FOUR has some interesting things to say about “the faith of Abraham.” It confirms some things we know about Abraham, and it corrects some wrong assumptions taught by churches.

This chapter recaps what we read in Chapter Three: i.e., that man is saved (justified) by grace, not by merit or works. Paul also confirms to us that God’s grace was active in the Old Testament eon, saving and justifying men as well as in the New Testament eon! The churches have wrongly depicted grace as something new and unique with Jesus. The truth is Yahweh has always been gracious and forgiving.

Paul also explains that Abraham is our father in two ways: he is our father by GENETICS. He is also our father by FAITH. “Father by genetics” means “pertaining to the flesh” as Paul words it. Abraham is our father because we are genetically (biologically) descended from him. It is defined by law or genealogical records. But, Paul goes on to say there is a greater factor.

The greater factor is PROMISE or FAITH. God gave Abraham a promise, and Abraham believed God. By believing the promise, Abraham earned the title “The Father of the Faithful.” When you and I believe God’s promise, following Abraham’s example, we become children of Abraham ... by faith. Thus, we are doubly descended from Abraham: 1. by genetics and 2. by faith. Of the two, Paul indicates that being descendents by faith is the higher calling.

Seeing we are connected back to Abraham in both ways, shouldn’t we strive to live up to family standards? We are Abraham’s descendants by both flesh and faith.

ROMANS 4:1-8 RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED

What then shall we say about Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh?

For if Abraham was justified by works he had reason for boasting. But this is not according to God.

NOTE: How did Abraham achieve righteousness? Was it by obedience? Was it by faith? No, neither!

God IMPUTED it to him because he believed. Abraham didn’t achieve it by merit. God looked upon Abraham as if he were righteous ... when in fact he wasn’t faultless. But he believed God.

To “impute” means: to reckon; to attribute; to count as: to ascribe.

God did this because Abraham believed Him.

Abraham’s righteousness was by IMPUTATION ... not by works or by anything he did. It is the same for us as it was for Abraham. Today, if we believe God and the testimony of Jesus, our faith is imputed to us for righteousness.

For what is scripture saying? Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now to the one working, the reward is not imputed of grace, but of debt.

But to the one not working, but believing on the One who justifies the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness.

Accordingly, David also speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

Blessed are they whose iniquities were dismissed, and whose sins were covered.

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

PAUL asks ... what made Abraham special? What quality did Abraham possess that we should remember and emulate, and that caused God to choose him as “the father of the faithful”?

The answer is that Abraham believed God. He believed the thing that God told him. That’s not the same as merely believing in God. Many people have believed in God without actually believing what God said. Abraham was different. He actually believed what God promised him, and God imputed that faith as righteousness. Thus, Abraham’s righteousness was not of works. God imputed righteousness to Abraham because he actually believed what God said.

Here is an all important theological point usually overlooked. Paul’s clear statement verifies that righteousness comes by imputation, through faith ... and NOT by law.

The principle is simple. God looks upon a man’s heart, not upon his outward flesh ... and it is a good thing, because if our justification depended upon our flesh (our outward works) we’d be in trouble.

7. ... for Yahweh sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart.

1 Sam. 16:7

When God looks upon our hearts He is looking at our faith. A man’s heart reflects his faith. God has always sought men to worship Him in spirit (with their hearts).

23. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him.

24. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

John 4:23-24

3. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

Having confidence (faith) in God, and not in flesh, is the key to being a son of God. Here, we are taught, clearly, that man cannot worship God properly except in spirit. Works are encouraged, but works without faith go wrong. The proper way to worship God is with your heart (i.e., in faith) because that is the only way man can worship in spirit. He whom you worship with your heart (i.e., with your faith) becomes the very center of your life. This is what God asked of Abraham, and what He asks of all men. It wasn’t Abraham’s law-keeping that made him righteous. Righteousness by the law is not within reach of mortal man. So if man is going to achieve righteousness he has to do it through faith. He has no other choice. Faith in God also enables man to love the law and follow it correctly ... a benefit in our daily lives.

In this chapter Paul is addressing people who made their boast of being law-keepers and therefore justified before God. He told them, “Your claim of law is not enough. God’s law is good, but without faith you neither understand nor follow his law.” Only by faith can man please God.

1. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

2. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed you from the law of sin and death.

3. Due to the law’s inability, being weak through the flesh, God sent his own Son in the likeness of flesh and sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

5. For they that are after the flesh do contemplate the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.

6. To heed the flesh is death, but to heed the spirit is life and peace.

7. Because to heed the flesh is enmity to God, for it is not in subjection to the law of God, for it cannot be.

8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9. But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit if the spirit of God is dwelling in you. ...

Rom. 8:1-9

Paul does not denigrate law and law-keeping. He merely states that law alone is insufficient to produce righteous-

ness. Paul is not anti-law, as some people who have misconstrued the scriptures try to say. Paul is saying that Abraham achieved something through faith that he could not have achieved by law ... righteousness was achieved aside from law. Abraham believed God, and God reckoned (imputed) that faith as righteousness. Faith didn't make him righteous by merit. God simply counted it for righteousness.

No man ever earned justification through the law alone. It is impossible. But Abraham was declared justified through faith. This explains how God designed man, and what He expects of man ... and what He does NOT expect.

Even in Old Testament times, David understood that justification was possible only when God chose to not impute man's sins. God imputed righteousness to men through grace – not through works. It was true during the Old Testament times, and it is still true in the New Testament times. Jesus didn't invent grace, He just streamlined it. You see, grace was not new with Christ. It was amplified and expanded through Christ, but it wasn't new.

In verses 6-8 Paul quotes David saying that God graciously chooses not to impute sin to men who are forgiven. The quote is from Psalm 32:

1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom Yahweh imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Psalm 32:1-2

In Abraham, God showed mankind the true way to worship Him: in spirit and truth ... through faith. Once that is established, good works can follow.

QUESTION: My family and I and my friends have been keeping God's Law for years. Are you telling me that it is not important?

QUESTION: I'm not trying to act or be "superior" to others, but when I point out something that's morally wrong (based on God's Law) people accuse me of thinking I'm better than them. They end up avoiding me because they think I'm self-righteous. Am I self-righteous for trying to follow God's law?

QUESTION: If God knows that every man is a sinner and no man can keep his law perfectly, and Jesus died on the cross for every man's sins, thereby justifying us all, then why does God still require us to abide by His Law?

ROMANS 4:9-15 HEIRS BY FAITH, NOT BY CIRCUMCISION

Is this blessing then for the circumcision only, or for the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness.

How then was it imputed? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of his faith while yet uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe through uncircumcision, that righteousness might be imputed to them;

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also to them in uncircumcision who walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham.

For it was not through law that the promise was to Abraham or to his seed to be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if they are heirs by law, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect:

For the law is working wrath: but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

PAUL was building on his quote from David which said, "Blessed is the man unto whom Yahweh imputes not iniquity." In this he contrasts the idea of righteousness-by-faith against the idea of righteousness-by-law.

Does the blessing or gift come by law (i.e., by circumcision, by membership in a fraternity, by law-keeping, by works?).

No. Imputed righteousness comes by faith. Does this faith and blessing come to the circumcised only, or does it come to non-circumcised as well?

Paul dropped a bomb on them. He told them that Abraham is the father of the faithful ... and they said, "Yes, yes!" He said that Abraham is our example for being faithful. And they said, "Yes, yes!" But then he asks, "When did Abraham set that example? At what point did God impute righteousness to Abraham? Was it when he was circumcised?"

Suddenly, as the thought sank in, the Judaists realized that they had just lost their argument. Abraham had been declared righteous by faith while he was yet uncircumcised. Righteousness was imputed to him for his faith while he was yet uncircumcised. Afterwards God gave Abraham the sign of circumcision as a symbol of his great faith.

Paul has just proven that the gift of imputed righteousness is a spiritual concept, and it supersedes the power of law. It came to Abraham by faith, not by keeping the law, and that is the way it comes to us. The seal of circumcision

was a sign to denote the faith that Abraham already had ... before he was circumcised (i.e., before works).

One might argue that Abraham proved his faith through works.

It is true that Abraham showed his faith through works. Works must follow faith. Works are the fruit of faith. As it says in James 2:20 & 26, "*Faith without works is dead*" But without faith, works are worthless ... lacking direction and inspiration. Works do not produce faith. Rather, works EXPRESS faith ... faith that already exists. God proclaimed Abram righteous BEFORE Abram evidenced his faith through his works. Faith comes first.

The point of these scriptures is to teach us about righteousness. It can only be imputed through faith. The Judeans tried to develop a righteousness of their own through a political/religious body of elite. That was the Jerusalem that crucified Jesus, and these represent the elite still today. Paul told them that there was only ONE acceptable form of righteousness, and theirs was NOT it!

Thus, Abraham's spiritual seed born of spirit, whether or not they were circumcised.

Notice the word "promise" in verse 13. You might want to underline that word in your Bible because it is the key to understanding this doctrine. Abraham became the heir of God's system and the father of all who come to God through faith in this promise. He is the progenitor of the children of promise. He was appointed the progenitor before he was circumcised – before he was given the name "Abraham" ... while he was still named "Abram." All of the blessings that we enjoy through Abraham today come by way of Abram's faith ... before he was circumcised.

That's just Paul's way of saying that the promise did not come through law. It came through faith. It began by faith and was carried by faith all along. If the promise had come by law, it would have failed ... because the Law could not produce it.

QUESTION: Are you saying that the belief that the pure-blooded descendants of Jacob are the only people worthy of God's Kingdom (the main tenet of the Identity Movement) is wrong?

ROMANS 4:16-17 PROMISE & FAITH SUPERCEDE LAW & WORKS

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace in order that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not only to him of the law, but to him of the faith of Abraham (who is the father of us all,

As it has been written, "I have appointed you the father of many nations") before God whom he believed, who is giving life to the dead, and calling the non-existent into existence.

GOD'S promise supersedes law protocol. Promise and faith operate beside law.

For example, what did the law say about the inheritance of the birthright blessing? The eldest brother is "the firstborn" and is supposed to inherit the birthright blessings from his father. But Abraham's firstborn was Ishmael, and Ishmael did not receive the birthright blessing. Abraham's birthright blessing, and the promise, went to Isaac, Ishmael's younger brother. By law Ishmael should have received the

birthright and the promise, but he didn't. The promise superceded the law.

As a matter of fact, on occasion Abraham would refer to Isaac as his only son (Gen. 22:2, 12, 16). By law (by the flesh), Isaac wasn't Abraham's only son. But according to promise he WAS the only son.

The "promise" was a matter unto itself. The seed line of promise was a spiritual line. Promise operates aside from "law." The PROMISE of God supersedes law! In Hebrews 6:18, Paul explains that God's promises are "immutable." That means that they cannot fail, cannot be broken, cannot be compromised ... unlike law.

The line of "Israel" has followed the line of PROMISE ... not the other way around. Some have taught that the promise followed the racial line of Israel. But that is not true. The seed of Israel guided by flesh went astray. The faith, not the flesh, remained true. Only a portion of the genetic seed followed the seed of the promise.

Plus, the majority of the racial offspring of Abraham were not even Israel. Racial Israel, in which was the line of promise, came from only ONE branch of the genetic offspring of Abraham. And then many of them fell away and reverted back to flesh seed, and lost the promise.

A case in point is that of Jacob and Esau: twin brothers. Esau, having been born first, was the eldest son. Being the eldest son, he should have inherited the birthright from his father, Isaac. But he didn't. The birthright, and Abraham's promise, went to Jacob instead. The promise superceded in favor of Jacob. It was a breach of law protocol. Twin brothers with the same genetics; one became "Israel," and the other brother did not.

The line of the Abrahamic covenant operates by promise, through faith ... not by flesh. The way of promise (by the spirit) has always been God's way, and his plan. Even the birth of Christ was by promise rather than by flesh ... in that the conception and birth could not have happened by flesh alone. A miracle occurred when Mary became pregnant

with Jesus. Jesus had no biological father. The miracle was a product of promise, not of law.

Then Jesus by promise became Israel's high priest even though He wasn't of the tribe of Levi. According to law, the priests came from the tribe of Levi, and the high priests came from the family of Aaron. But Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Nonetheless He became High Priest of Israel (Heb. 2:17). Again, the promise manifested in ways that were aside from law and protocol.

When men boast of their righteousness by law it just proves that what Paul taught is true: men are liars and fools. Paul explains that the law was, at that very time, "working wrath" because of sins and transgressions there among them. This, in itself, was evidence that Jerusalem was in transgressions ... i.e., in violation of the law. Yet the Judeans claimed, against all logic and common sense, to be righteous by the law.

Paul was saying that Yahweh is a God of faith: a God that gives life to the dead, and calls the nonexistent into existence. Thus God called the lost and dead, and gave them life. He turned them into the seed of promise again:

9. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

1 Peter 2:10

The flesh seed (genetic Israel) had gotten lost and were no longer "a people." Through Christ and the New Covenant, God was making them into "a people" again ... through faith. These new "people" were designated by a wholly different process. They inherited the "faith of Abraham" and were counted for Abraham's "seed by faith." They were racial Israelites, but up until they found the faith of Abra-

ham they were lost, dead and “not a people.”

The Biblical definition of faith is found in Hebrews chapter 11. Lets understand what Paul is getting at when he says that God justifies us through faith. Translated correctly from the Greek text it reads differently than in the King James Version:

1. Now faith is assurance of things expected, contemplation of things not in sight.

Heb. 11:1

Abraham believed God. He had confidence that God would perform what He promised. Faith means confidence in something not seen. Abraham looked for a city made without hands – a city he couldn't see with his eyes. The city that Abraham sought was “New Jerusalem.” Abraham knew it existed, even though he couldn't see it with his eyes. But it existed ... and still does. It was NOT a physical city - then or now. “New Jerusalem” is not a geographical location like New York, London, or Old Jerusalem. New Jerusalem isn't physical! It is the spiritual city of the faithful of all ages, and it exists in the realm of the heart. It exists, and it is real. It is as real as love. You can't see love, but it exists. New Jerusalem binds believers together as sure as love binds family together. Like love, the spiritual bonds of New Jerusalem are immortal and not subject to physical powers. Nothing in the physical world can destroy love. Nothing in the physical world can defile or hurt New Jerusalem.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor messengers, nor governments, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom. 8:38-39

Love is immortal. Faith is immortal. And God's promise is sure and certain.

Were speaking of faith. Paul is weeding out the self-righteous and the faithless who have legalistic mindsets, who exercise temporal power through manipulations of politics and religion. You may wonder why Paul was so caustic toward these people. He utilized a strategy for discovering who in a crowd is open to truth. If they were not mad at him by the time he was through with this sharp-tongued introduction, then they were candidates for hearing truth.

TWO SEPARATE SEEDLINES

6. ... For not all of Israel are Israel.

7. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but in Isaac (i.e., by promise) shall your seed be called.

8. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Rom. 9:6-8

16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, “And to seeds,” as of many; but as of one, “And to your seed,” which is Christ.

18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Gal. 3:16, 18

As you can see, there is a seed by law, and there is a seed by faith in the promise. Abraham is not called the Father of the race, or the Father of the law. He is called the Father of the Faithful. Only a portion of his racial seed inherited the promise. The rest did not. His “seed of promise” are the ones that are called “the seed” according to faith. And while that faith is indigenous among racial Israelites, it is not necessarily restricted to Israelites.

Genetically, by law, the designation of “seed” would mean racial offspring only. But these two verses talk directly about two different lines of people – two different seeds: one of race, and one of promise.

Abraham was told he would be “a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4). The term “nation” comes from “natal,” and it simply means “by birth.” A “nation” is a family or race of people. Abraham has become the Father of many faithful families (nations). To be a child of Abraham by faith requires one to have Abraham's faith ... with or without Abraham's biological genes.

Paul says that God was causing men to become “children of Abraham” via the “new birth.” The God who called Abraham is the God who was now quickening the dead (Rom. 4: 16-17). Notice Paul did not say that God would someday quicken the dead, but that He WAS QUICKENING the dead right then.

God was, at that very time, putting life into people who had been spiritually dead. And if you've been reading and studying the lessons we publish here at American Christian Ministries, then you know the kind of “life” and “death” Paul was talking about. It is a life that raises men out of spiritual death. It gives men the ability to see and to hear things that they couldn't see or hear before, when they were dead. It gives men the ability to hear Christ and see the Kingdom. Our God gives spiritual life to the spiritually-dead (see the example of the “dry bones” in Ez. 37).

Now, as for this “seed” lineage, let's turn to Genesis 3 and follow this through a couple of fairly simple steps.

14. And Yahweh God said to the serpent, Because you have done this you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life:

Genesis 3:14

As you read Genesis, try to avoid thinking in terms of church mythology and observe the figurative language for what it is. Instead of a mythical devil who turns himself into a talking snake, this “serpent” was what we would call in our vernacular “a false prophet.” He was probably a priest or a politician trying to recruit Adam into his system. Yes, talking “serpents” are MEN. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing: priests, politicians, or leaders who deceive men to gain wealth and power!

The figurative language goes on to say that the “serpent” (false prophet) was cursed. He led a life which consisted of “going upon his belly” ... a figurative expression which meant that he FOLLOWED the dictates of his belly. This Hebrew idiom refers to a life that’s based upon appetite, lust, and greed. These are symbolized by the “belly.” The *serpent* was peddling a philosophy which taught men to follow their bellies (i.e., their lustful flesh nature). *Serpents*, ancient and modern, persuade men to ignore the higher spirit of God and to follow their lower flesh nature ... which leads to a diet of dust (low, base things).

15. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

This is figurative language, not literal. This was not a literal woman or a literal snake. Rather, it is a comparison between two opposing paradigms, or two opposing motivations: one of the *serpent and his seed* and one of the *woman and her seed*. The woman and her seed represent those who seek after God. The serpent and his seed represent those who follow after their bellies. So, the *woman and her seed* would bruise the head of the *serpent and his seed*, and the *serpent and his seed* would bruise the heel of the *woman and her seed*.

The term “seed” in this case refers to *spiritual offspring* (i.e., disciples, followers). Spiritual offspring come

from spiritual fathers from whom we learn spiritual values – either good or bad. We can be the spiritual seed of a good teacher, or of a false prophet. Some people become spiritual seed of false prophets when they accept their bellies (their feelings) as their source of truth instead of God’s word.

So, what we have here is a figurative statement which says that those who follow their bellies (lusts of the flesh) will be *spiritual seed of the serpent*, which is the way of natural man.

False prophets in churches have taught nonsense about these scriptures, teaching that the serpent was a literal snake ... or a supernatural devil. Some even teach that a literal devil-snake mated physically with Eve and conceived a lineage of serpent-like beings through Cain. Those who teach this nonsense usually also claim that a serpent race, from Cain, exists today, and its members are the cause of all evil in the world. Of course, it is patent nonsense. The absurd idea that Eve mated with a supernatural Devil, conceived and gave birth to a hybrid race of half-human half-Devil beings may fit in Hollywood but not in the Bible.

Now, to understand better what the *seed of the woman* represents, let’s read in Galatians Four:

21. Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

22. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23. But he (Ishmael) who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he (Isaac) of the freewoman was by promise.

Gal. 4:21-23

Here we see one father, and two sons. One son was in bondage to his belly, and the other son was free by virtue of “the spirit.” Ishmael was “born of the flesh,” and was in bondage with his mother. Isaac, on the other hand, inherited the spirit of promise ... after “*the seed of the woman*” (Gen. 3:15, Rom. 4:16). Thus there are two lineages which play a part in Paul’s teaching: the lineage

of the flesh, and the lineage of the spirit. Followers of the promise are called “children of the promise.” Followers of their bellies are “children of flesh.” People who follow after the faith of Abraham are “seed of promise” – spiritually speaking.

Out of Abraham came seed of the flesh, as well as seed of the promise. The story of Jacob and Esau is an obvious example. Jacob, the younger brother, received the birthright that should have been Esau’s by law. Esau was out of Isaac, and therefore of Abraham’s flesh. But Esau did not receive the promise. The story of Isaac and Ishmael is another example. Both were of Abraham, but both did not receive the promise. Same race, same family ... but one received the promise, and the other didn’t. Thus, the PROMISE is not determined by race. It is determined by something else: God’s spirit and grace.

Let’s continue to see how Galatians describes the two lineages – the two seeds:

24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gives birth into bondage, which is Hagar.

25. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26. But Jerusalem which is above (New Jerusalem) is free, who is our mother.

Galatians 4:24-26

Hagar represented physical Jerusalem and her people who were following their bellies. Those were not the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Jesus himself confronted these same people face to face with this fact. Their response was:

39. They answered and said to him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.”

44. “You are of your father the devil (your belly), and the lusts of your

father you are doing.”

John 8:39 & 44

The “circumcision” (seed of the flesh) in Jerusalem were in bondage. They were following their bellies. They were not following the promise. They were not free. This was determined not by their genetics, but by their spirit. This truth was hated by the establishment in Jerusalem.

Here, Paul speaks of our mother: New Jerusalem, or New Israel. New Jerusalem is determined by promise, not by race. Racial distinctions still exist, and are important ... but the PROMISE did not apply to all of Abraham’s biological descendants. In this we see fulfillment of Genesis 3.

These are the two covenants. One covenant was a physical covenant dealing with men’s bellies (i.e., their carnal natures) through the law. The other covenant was a faith covenant – that is, a covenant that concerned the spirit of God through promise. Therefore, Paul tells us that we are “heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29) – not heirs according to the flesh.

27. For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband.

Galatians 4:27

Here, the woman who was barren (Sarah: New Jerusalem) ended up with more spiritual seed than the woman who bore flesh seed (Hagar: Old Jerusalem). Sarah had been barren, but through God’s promise she conceived and produced a seed of promise: Isaac. From Isaac came Jacob. And from Jacob came the Children of Israel ... all of whom inherited Abraham’s promise. But some of the Children of Israel did not choose to believe in that promise. Thus, they reverted back to being “seed of the flesh.”

28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was

born after the spirit, even so it is now.

Galatians 4:28-29

Isaac is compared with Ishmael. Isaac, the second-born, received the promise; Ishmael, the heir by law (by flesh), did not. Same father, same lineage, but the younger brother inherited the promise and the elder brother didn’t.

There are those who say the reason Ishmael did not receive the promise was by law because he was of a different mother (Hagar). But in fact the law DOES NOT specify this. Abraham’s oldest son was Ishmael, and by law he should have received the birthright blessing.

Paul says that what made Isaac special was that he was the son of the promise. Isaac was born of the promise. That is to say, Isaac and Ishmael had the same genetic father but the two sons received different spirits. One was of the spirit of the flesh (the belly), and one was of the spirit of the promise. Genetically they had the same father, but spiritually they had different fathers.

So, here we see a spiritual essence – a spiritual condition which defined and set Isaac apart, and then Jacob. THE SEED OF THE PROMISE HAS ALWAYS BEEN DETERMINED BY SPIRIT, NOT BY FLESH.

True Israel has always been a spiritual lineage, right from the beginning. God chose Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, etc., all selected out from among racial equals. They were racially equal, but spiritually unequal. The selection was never determined by genetics, but by God’s selection ... by promise. Otherwise, why would God call only a portion of a race “Israel” instead of the whole race? You see, the name “Israel” was a spiritual designation. It means, literally, “led of God.” These were a remnant from within a large race. It was not the entire race. Israel was created not by the power of genetics, but by the power of spirit.

Now, what are we learning from Galatians and from Romans? It’s pretty clear. I don’t see how anyone can refute it. Being born after the flesh

is one thing. Being born after the spirit is another thing altogether.

30. Nevertheless what says the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son (seed of the flesh): for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman (seed of the promise).

31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Galatians 4:30-31

Heirs are not determined by genetics. Heirs are determined by promise: by spirit. The SONS of God are heirs. Only those who are sons by spirit are the heirs.

So, being a racial Israelite is not enough. You must also be a “son.” You must be a SON to be an “heir.” This process is called “sonship” (wrongly translated “adoption” in the KJV), and Paul explains it in Galatians 3:14 – 4:7. We who are born of the spirit are “heirs according to the promise.” Not heirs according to our race. We are not children of the bondwoman (of the flesh) but of New Jerusalem: the free woman (of the spirit).

QUESTION: Are you saying that racial differences are not important, and that it is okay for people of other races to mix with White people as long as they have the faith of Abraham? Wouldn’t this promote race mixing, especially where young people were involved? Are you an advocate of race mixing?

ROMANS 4:18-25 WE SHOULD FOLLOW ABRAHAM'S EXAMPLE

Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, "So shall your seed be."

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 Sarah's womb:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

And being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

WHEN you see the word "nations" in the Bible, think "families." Abraham was "the father of many families, according to that which was spoken ...". Now, let's turn back to Genesis 15 to see what is being referenced. We're talking about the promise to Abraham, and the quote to notice is, "so shall your seed be."

1. After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.

Genesis 15:1

This was before his name was changed to Abraham. This was when his name was Abram. In other words, this was before he became a member of the circumcision, as Paul refers to it.

2. And Abram said, Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3. And Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is my heir.

Genesis 15:2, 3

Abram had no sons to carry on his lineage, and he wondered how he could have an heir. He even had another man come in and take care of his house for him or to oversee his house whereas normally a son would oversee his house.

1. And, behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir.

2. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you are able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall your seed be.

Genesis 15:4, 5

This was the prophecy from which came the statement, "So shall your seed be." God said, "Look to the heavens and count the stars and, if you can count the stars, then you'll know how many heirs you're going to have." That meant that Abram would definitely have a son.

3. And he believed Yahweh; and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 15:6

God told Abram he was going to father a son, and Abram believed God. That sets the stage for understanding the two seeds of Abraham: the seed of the flesh and the seed of the spirit. Abram believed, so he became the father of the faithful ... and indeed he had a son. He had a SON OF PROMISE. So we see a chosen people according to race. But even MORE importantly we see a people chosen according to the promise. Now let's return to Romans chapter four.

Even though Abraham believed what God was telling him as he looked up into the night sky, he probably didn't quite grasp the enormity and importance of God's agenda in terms of his spiritual seed (those whose numbers would be as hard to count as the stars in heaven). Many spiritual sons would follow in the steps of Abraham, believing in the promise, and being designated "sons" of faith.

So, here is a man a hundred years old, and his wife close to that, and his body, and his wife's body, were too old to produce a child. But Abraham believed that God could do what He said, and this belief was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. Abraham

believed that Yahweh could do that which is impossible for man.

“Impute” is a word that simply means “to reckon, or attribute to.” The way it was worded in Genesis is “counted for” – that is, his faith was *counted for* righteousness. The way Paul would say it: “his faith was imputed to him for righteousness.” The

criterion that God used for judging Abraham’s righteousness was *faith*.

Righteousness was imputed to Abraham because he believed Yahweh. He believed that Yahweh would give him a son. Similarly, if we believe God then our faith is imputed or reckoned to us as righteousness. If we believe that Yahweh raised Christ from the dead, and if we take Him as our

King, we become citizens in his Kingdom.

God asks us to believe in Him and his Son. If we do, He counts it as righteousness, and includes us as spiritual seed in the faith of Abraham.

And these are the two seed lines in the Bible. One is of flesh, and the other is of spirit.

QUESTION: If Faith, instead of Works is the means to justification why does James say in chapter 2:

14. *What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

17. *Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.*

18. *Yea, a man may say, you have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. The most important point of this lesson is that **RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IMPUTED TO MAN**. That is the **ONLY** way man can be deemed righteous. As it was with Abraham, so it is with all mankind. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham. He didn’t earn it. It was given to him by decree. To “impute” means to attribute, or to ascribe. God ascribed righteousness to Abraham because he believed God. God gave Abraham a promise, and Abraham believed Him. Because of that, God chose to attribute (impute) righteousness to Abraham.

2. Righteousness (justification) was imputed to Abraham before he was circumcised, and it was through faith and not works. Faith did not make him righteous, but it did show his love for

God. Love is not a “work”, but his love was recognized by God and moved him to impute righteousness to Abraham. This is also called “grace.”

3. Law is incapable of making a man righteous. Paul calls the law “weak” in comparison to faith (Rm. 8:1-4). Law is limited in capability. It can only define sin. It takes more than law to make a man righteous. It requires faith and imputation from God. If a man believes God, as Abraham did, God will freely impute righteousness to him even though he is not faultless.

4. When God opts to “not impute sin” to a man (Ps. 32:1-2), that is the same thing as grace.

5. The Promise of God, through Abraham, did not come through law. It came through faith.

6. Without faith, law is ineffective and

misdirected. For law to be useful to man, he first needs faith. Faith makes law understandable and useable.

7. Faith, like love, is more powerful than law. It can do things law cannot do. However, faith and love are not optional alternatives to law. Faith and love are required to make law work the way it is intended. Together they can do good work.

8. Abraham has two seed lines: one genetic, and the other spirit. One is called “the children of the promise,” and the other is called “the children of the flesh” (Rm. 9:6-8).

9. The “seed of the flesh” are those who follow their bellies (*lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life*). (1 Jn. 2:16; Gen. 3:14; Jn. 8:39 & 44).

10. Worshipping through faith is the same as worshipping “in spirit and in truth” (1 Sam. 16:7; Jn. 4:23-24).

ANSWERS:

pg. 3

a. No, I'm not saying law is unimportant. Law is very important. If it weren't important God would not have given it to us. But man has no ability to follow God's law unless he is first born in the spirit. If you keep law because you think it is justifying you, then your reason is wrong. It is essential that you understand the purpose of law. Law is useful to show you how to keep your life in order, and how to treat your fellow man right. Faith is what enables man to understand law. Faith puts man's heart in the right relationship with law.

b. Following God's law does not make you self-righteous ... unless you think you are righteous by virtue of law.

People often do not accept criticism gracefully. When they are accused of error they can turn the accusation back upon you. It's their way of countering your criticism. I don't know a way to gracefully correct people who don't like correction. And, perhaps it is best if they avoid you, and you avoid them. Just be sure that in your pointing out of errors that your motive is to help, and not to condemn.

c. Confusion about this issue comes from mixing two separate dynamics:

1. The power of law,
2. The power of spirit.

I once heard about a missionary who taught an Indian about God's law against thievery. He told the Indian that God would hold him responsible for any horses he might steal now that he has been made aware of the law. The Indian asked, "If you had not told me about the law, would God still hold me guilty when I steal a horse?" The missionary said, "No, not if you were ignorant of the law." The Indian replied, "Why, then, did you tell me?"

Obviously, the Indian did not grasp the advantage of God's law.

This story illustrates the problem that burdens many unthinking Christians. Theft is theft regardless of whether or not the thief understands God's law. And thieves, if caught, usually are punished for stealing ... whether they thought it is morally wrong or not. But a thief who knows God's law is judged by a higher standard. The ignorant thief is guilty of only theft. But the thief who knew better is guilty of more; he is not only guilty of theft, but also guilty of defying God's trust.

God's law tells us how to keep from harming each other ... as by thievery. But there is more than thievery at stake, and there is more offered than just knowledge of the law. God also offers a spirit that can help man relate to his law ... which leads to a greater and closer relationship with God. He tells us to honor the law, but in order to do that we must know the Lawgiver. Reach for his spirit. Only the spirit can teach you how to honor the law rightly, and how to worship God rightly, because you are a child of Abraham and an Heir of the Promise.

Pg. 5a.

Yes, that doctrine is wrong. The fact is, no one is worthy of God's Kingdom. We access God's kingdom by grace, not by merit. Racial distinction is important in terms of genetics, heritage, history, community and family. These become pertinent to God's people AFTER they have faith. Racial purity does not produce righteousness; rather, it is the logical product of righteousness.

Pg. 8

No. I do not advocate race mixing. On the contrary, I believe race mixing should be avoided. God can be gracious to different races without them mixing together. The message of Jesus was that there is something which transcends flesh (race). That thing is SPIRIT. Spirit can change and improve flesh, or a whole race. The absence of spirit can hurt flesh, or a whole race. The gist of this

is that the consideration of flesh is insufficient. Spirit must lead the flesh.

Pg. 12

James is not pitting faith against works. Rather he is teaching that faith must come first in order to produce good works ... otherwise the works go wrong. Works are good, but they cannot function correctly without faith. Works without faith is like a ship without a captain. By the same token, faith without works is like a captain without a ship. Works and faith, to be worthwhile, must work together. Just as faith without works is dead, it can also be said that works without faith are misdirected and erroneous.

This is essentially what John declared to the Judaists who came to scrutinize his baptisms:

7. But when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees arriving at the baptism, he said to them, Generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

8. Produce therefore fruits appropriate for repentance.

9. And do not presume to be saying among yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God is able, from these stones, to raise up children to Abraham.

10. The ax is already laid to the root of the tree; therefore, every tree that does not produce fruit is being cut out and thrown into the fire.

Mtt. 3:7-10.

END OF ROMANS CHAPTER FOUR