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# The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 4 Verses 9-25

So, does anything have to come 'prior' to being justified? This is the question that the Apostle Paul covers in verses 9-12. In other words, does God justify the ungodly 'as is?' Or, does something have to happen to the ungodly before they are justified? Perhaps the ungodly might need to clean up their life a little bit before being justified? Maybe they need to cross all their T's and dot all their I's before the Lord can grant them forgiveness? Or, do they have to cry a certain amount of tears to prove that they are truly sorry before they can be forgiven – as if their sorrow earns them forgiveness?

Paul's answer is all of this is 'no!' The forgiveness of sins was proclaimed to Abraham *prior* to Abraham being given circumcision. Abraham was justified while uncircumcised.

Therefore, being a child of Abraham – a descendant of Abraham – is to be an ungodly person justified solely by the Lord. That is to say; genealogy lineage, works, ethnicity, accomplishments, intellect, emotional experiences, etc. do not contribute or need to come *before* being justified! The Lord justifies the ungodly. And who are the ungodly? Well,

the Apostle Paul has just stated in chapter three that everyone is ungodly. There is no one who is good, not even one!

And so, Abraham is the Father of Jews *and* Gentles. He is the Father of the ungodly who are justified by grace, through faith, in Christ alone! He is the Father of all believers!

Looking at verses 13 and following, it is important to see the flow of Paul's thought. The giving and fulfillment of the original promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, is not a consequence of Abraham following the Law, but rather it is because of Abraham receiving the promise by faith.

And so, we see two different ways of thinking. As is characteristic of Pharisaical type thinking, mankind relates to God through the Law, obligations, ladder-climbing, and works-righteousness. On the

other hand, God relates to mankind through the promise, grace, faith, justification, etc. The first way relies on mankind; the second relies on the promises of God.

Frankly stated, we see these two ways all the way back to Cain and Abel. Too often we try to frame the great heroes of the Old Testament with the theology of Cain. Abraham is not the Father of the faith, according to Cain, but according to the way of Abel. Again, we see this dichotomy between these two theologies throughout all of the scriptures, history, and even today. For example:

<u>Works/Law</u>	<u>Grace/Promise</u>
Cain	Abel
Hagar	Sarah
Pharisees	Jesus
Older Brother	Prodigal Son
Rich Man	Lazarus
Pharisee	Tax Collector
Judaizers	Paul
Pelagius	Augustine
Erasmus	Luther
Finney	Nevin
Osteen	Horton

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) When we say that we are justified by grace through faith in the promises of God, are we negating the Law?
- 2) Is there any common ground between the spirit of Cain versus the spirit of Abel? Can they coexist?
- 3) What are the consequences of a church that goes the way of Cain, Hagar, the Pharisees, etc.?
- 4) What does the church of Abel look like in contrast?



