



PART 4: FATHER ABRAHAM

INTRODUCTION – A New Way Of Looking At Life

Mark 1:14-15

Look To The Book

Romans 3:21-4:25

A QUICK SUMMARY...

1. Paul has established that rebellious (as well as moralizing) Gentiles and religious Jews are all in need of rescue from their entrapment “under sin” (3:9) and that the Law of Moses only points the way but does not achieve the needed liberation (3:20-21).
2. Now Paul points to the Liberator and hints at how rescue is achieved through the cross. Jesus achieves what no one, Jew or Gentile, could achieve on their own. He is the bridge to what we have seeking, offering us spiritual cleansing as a gift (3:24).
3. This gift of righteousness is given freely, but not forcibly. We have a part to play in receiving it – simply by *trusting* God (3:22-24).
4. Justification (being “righteoused” by God) is more powerful than mercy. Mercy is pardon granted to the guilty. Justification is the verdict that there is no guilt!
5. Jesus’ death is the *hilasterion*, the place of atonement (“at-one-ment”), where God meets with us and responds with cleansing, forgiveness, mercy, and love (3:25).
6. This gift of grace robs the foundation for any religious pride (3:27-28), especially since God “**justifies the wicked**” (4:5). “No expression in Romans is more startling”, says John Stott.
7. Because God is one (*The Shema*) there should be only one family of faith (3:28-30).
8. We do not, therefore, reject the Old Testament, but endeavour to read it rightly (3:31).
9. Chapter 4 is a Jewish *Midrash* (Commentary) on **Genesis 15:6**.
 - a. Abraham was made righteous simply by trusting God, not by *works* (4:1-8).
 - b. Abraham was made righteous simply by trusting God, not by *circumcision* (4:9-12).
 - c. Abraham was made righteous simply by trusting God, not by the *Law* (4:13-17).
 - d. Through Jesus, God fulfills his promise to Abraham to make him the father of “many nations”, not just one ethnic group (4:16-24).
10. We know Jesus’ death is the pivot point, the *hilasterion*, because of the resurrection (4:25).

So What?

TAKE OUT #1:

Because God is one (*The Shema*) there should be only one family of faith (3:29-30). Jesus is the end of all religious _____.

TAKE OUT #2:

Our church family should embody the fact that we are all forgiven _____, transformed failures, saved by grace (4:4-8).

TAKE OUT #3:

If our ultimate future is as _____ as our past, then it can be our fixed-point for self-definition (3:25-26; 4:4-5, 16; 8:1).

CONCLUSION – Receiving The Gift By Faith

Faith is not in opposition to fact, but _____ in the one who has the power to create new facts (4:18-22). This is fundamentally different than simply following a religious tradition.

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP & REVIEW...

1. Discuss the implications of this quote by John Stott: *Justification is the heart of the gospel and unique to Christianity. No other system, ideology or religion proclaims a free forgiveness and a new life to those who have done nothing to deserve it but a lot to deserve judgement instead. All other systems teach some form of self-salvation through good works of religion, righteousness or philanthropy. Christianity, by contrast, is not in its essence a religion at all; it is a gospel, the gospel, good news that God's grace has turned away his wrath.*
2. Use your notes to review this week's message. As you go, talk about what challenged, perplexed, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Review our key text (3:21-4:25).
 - a. What verse or thought stands out to you the most? Why?
 - b. What statements or phrases in this passage do you think would have been most controversial to Paul's first-century audience (especially see 3:28 & 4:5, but move on to find more)? For each one you list, discuss why it would be so scandalous to its original audience and also what its controversial implications might be for today.
4. In what way does Jesus' death and resurrection (4:25) parallel **Matthew 9:2-8**?

SO WHAT?...

5. In light of TAKE OUT #2, what might be some practical ways we can better embody this reality a) at The Meeting House in general, b) in your Home Church, and c) in your own life? How so? Pray for each other and your Home Church regarding this.
6. In light of TAKE OUT #3, how might this truth impact your self-perception and ongoing emotional well-being? Pray for each other that you experience maximum impact.

HOMEWORK...

7. Read ahead. What questions does **Romans 5-6** raise for you?

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, February 20 / 27, 2005