

DESIDERATA¹
ROMANS 4:1-15, THE ULTIMATE “SOMETHING FOR NOTHING”
NOVEMBER 23, 2008

BIG IDEA: ABRAHAM IS THE QUINTESSENTIAL² PROOF OF THE FAITH PUDDING.

Romans 4:3, *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

INTRODUCING ABRAHAM:

1. *So important a role does he occupy in God's world-purpose, that his life and its lessons occupy third place in the New Testament, his name occurring no fewer than seventy-four times.³*
2. Called the “friend of God”: **James 2:23** *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. (Cf. **2 Chronicles 20:7**; **Isaiah 41:8**)*
3. **Notice his pagan familial background: Joshua 24:2-3** *Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshipped other gods.' ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the River and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants.*

THE STEPS OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT:

1. THE BOOK OF GENESIS **AFFIRMS** ABRAHAM'S FAITH-RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - **Verse 3**, *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*
 - Cf. **Genesis 15:4-6** *Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*
2. WORKPLACE VOCABULARY **SUPPORTS** ABRAHAM'S FAITH-RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - Syllogism:
 - **Work** results in **wages**, which is an **obligation**.
 - **Faith** results in **righteousness**, which is a **gift**.
 - **Verses 4-5**, ⁴ *Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*
3. DAVID **RESONATES** WITH ABRAHAM'S FAITH-RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - **Verses 6-8**, *David* says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ *"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."*
 - **Quoting** from **Psalm 32:1-2**, *Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*
4. CIRCUMCISION DOES **NOT NEGATE** ABRAHAM'S FAITH-RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - **Verse 10**, *Under what circumstances was it [righteousness] credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!*
 - Abraham's circumcision was done when he was **99 years old** (see Genesis 17:24)
5. OLD TESTAMENT LAW ITALICIZES **THE NEED** FOR ABRAHAM'S FAITH-RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - **Verse 13**, ¹³ *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

¹ *Desideratum: Something considered necessary or highly desirable.*

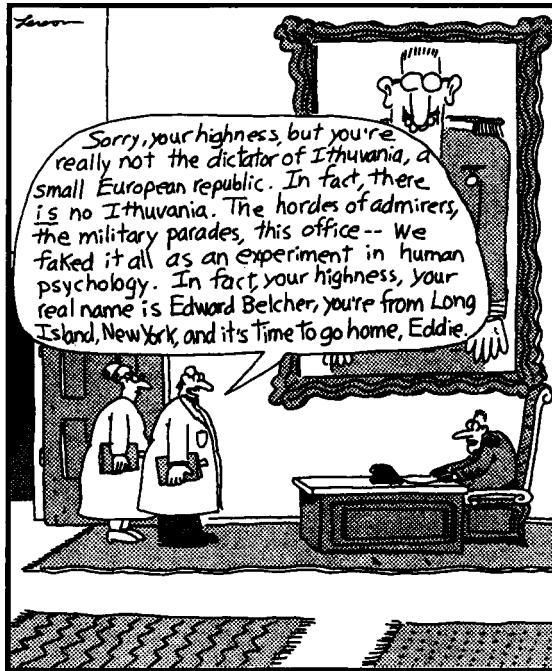
² “Quintessence”: (2) *The most perfect embodiment of something* (per Random House Webster's, 1995)

³ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Manpower* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965/1970), 13-14.

HEARTWARMING INSIGHTS:

I. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PROMOTES HUMILITY

- **Jeremiah 9:23-24** *This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.*



- *C. S. Lewis walked into a room where religious experts were discussing what was unique about Christianity. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." (Young, Op. Cit, 53)*

II. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PROMOTES JOY.

- **Verses 7-8, "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."**

III. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PROVIDES SECURITY

- A. Law is **performance-based** and there is no security there.
- B. Grace is **Promise-based** and there is bombproof security there
 - *16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

NOTE: Hebrews 11:8-12 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*

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