

The Royal Law & Salvation: Imputed Righteousness by Grace through Faith: The Judaizers Reject Grace; Paul's Debater's Technique in Rom 4:2; Divine Integrity

IV. The Royal Law and Salvation:

1. Application of the royal law by Christ on the cross resulted in those who believe in Christ to be "counted righteous" by God. This concept is presented by Paul in Romans 4 where he uses the faith of Abraham in Genesis 15:6 to refute the Judaistic contention that salvation is accomplished by works of the Law.

Romans 4:2 - If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (NASB)

2. Here Paul presents a *hypothetical supposition* in the form of a protasis that agrees with the Jews' erroneous view of salvation by means of works and establishes the basis for the conclusion in the apodosis.
3. The verse is introduced by the conditional particle **εἰ, ei** translated "if" and the inferential conjunction **γάρ, gar**, translated "for" which indicates what follows is hypothetical and therefore an assumption.
4. They are followed by the proper noun **Ἀβραάμ, Abraam** and the aorist passive indicative of the verb **δικαίωω, dikaiōō**. The particle *ei* plus the indicative mood indicates that this is a first class condition that assumes the statement to be true for the sake of argument.
5. *Dikaiōō* means "to justify," that is, to establish a person as righteous. The supposition takes the position, "If Abraham was justified by works (and it is true)."
6. Paul agrees with the legalists in the protasis in order to demonstrate the fallacy of their position. The aorist tense is constative and presents the action of the verb in its entirety.
7. The constative aorist indicates a completed action and implies that Abraham was justified at the point he committed his alleged good works.
8. The Jews would not agree with this idea. Their contention was that good works are required over the course of a lifetime before one can consider himself righteous.
9. The passive voice indicates that Abraham received the action of being justified by his works. The indicative mood is potential since this is a statement from the standpoint of supposition.
10. This is followed by a prepositional phrase, the preposition **ἐξ, ex** plus its object in the ablative of means, **ἔργον, ergon**: "by means of works."
11. The source of Abraham's justification is by means of his personal works and gives us this translation:

Romans 4:2a - For assuming that Abraham has been justified by means of works ...

12. The apodosis follows next, introduced by the present active indicative of the verb **ἔξω, exō**, translated “he has.” The present tense is progressive indicating an action in a state of progress. The active voice is assumed action on the part of Abraham as part of Paul’s debater’s technique. The indicative mood is therefore potential.

13. What Abraham is assumed to have is indicated by the noun **καύχημα, kauchēma**: “a basis for boasting.”

Romans 4:2 - For assuming that Abraham has been justified by means of works then he has a basis for boasting ...

14. Paul has now established that Abraham does have a basis for boasting about being justified by his works, but to this he adds a caveat. It is introduced by the adversative conjunction **ἀλλά, alla** which sets up a contrast between the legalistic gospel of salvation by works held by the Judaizers and the gospel of salvation by grace demonstrated by the historical example of Abraham.

15. This contrast is stated next beginning with the negative conjunction **οὐκ, ouk** which denies the reality of the alleged fact that Abraham was justified by his works.

16. This is followed by the preposition **πρός, pros** plus the proper noun **Θεός, Theos**: “but not face to face with God.

17. Implication: justification at salvation is by grace through faith alone and therefore God is not impressed with human good, human works, or any other human contrivance.

Romans 4:2 - For assuming that Abraham has been justified by means of works, then he has a basis for boasting [**καύχημα, kauchēma**: to take personal glory in or to exult in], but not before God.

18. Analysis:

- 1) Paul is using a debater’s technique wherein he makes a statement assumed to be true in order to prove that it is false.
- 2) The proposition assumes that the justification of Abraham was based on his works and as a result Abraham has a basis for taking credit for his own salvation.
- 3) However, if a person is in need of salvation then it follows that he is at enmity with God and as a result there needs to be an adjustment made on the part of one or the other.
- 4) It is clear that Abraham is the one who is required to make that adjustment and the assumption by the Judaizers is that this adjustment is accomplished by works.
- 5) Thus a question arises: To what must Abraham adjust with his works in order to allegedly be justified?
- 6) The answer is found in an examination of the integrity of God. First of all, both Paul and the Judaizers agree that God is perfect and therefore free of sin, error, and wrongdoing.

- 7) God's perfection is identified by His righteousness, which is to be perceived by man as divine standards to which each person must adjust.
- 8) Those who are imperfect are the ones who must adjust to God's perfection, not vice versa.
- 9) Righteousness establishes the *principle* of divine integrity and justice is its *function*. Righteousness demands righteousness and justice demands justice. What righteousness demands justice executes.
- 10) Whatever righteousness accepts justice blesses; whatever righteousness rejects justice condemns.
- 11) Righteousness demands perfection which mankind as a fallen species cannot provide.
- 12) Every person is born with a genetically formed sinful nature to which Adam's original sin is imputed resulting. The result is status quo corruption and exclusion from a personal relationship with God.
- 13) The demands of divine righteousness results in an affinity between human corruption and divine condemnation.
- 14) At selection, which occurs at physical birth, every person is considered unqualified to receive the imputation of divine righteousness. Therefore, divine righteousness demands that our fallen condition be condemned.
- 15) If corruption and condemnation make up the status quo of the unbeliever then it is impossible for a fallen creature to do anything to satisfy the demands of a righteous God.
- 16) Consequently, if condemnation is to be lifted, then deliverance must be initiated by the righteous party, not the condemned party in the dispute.