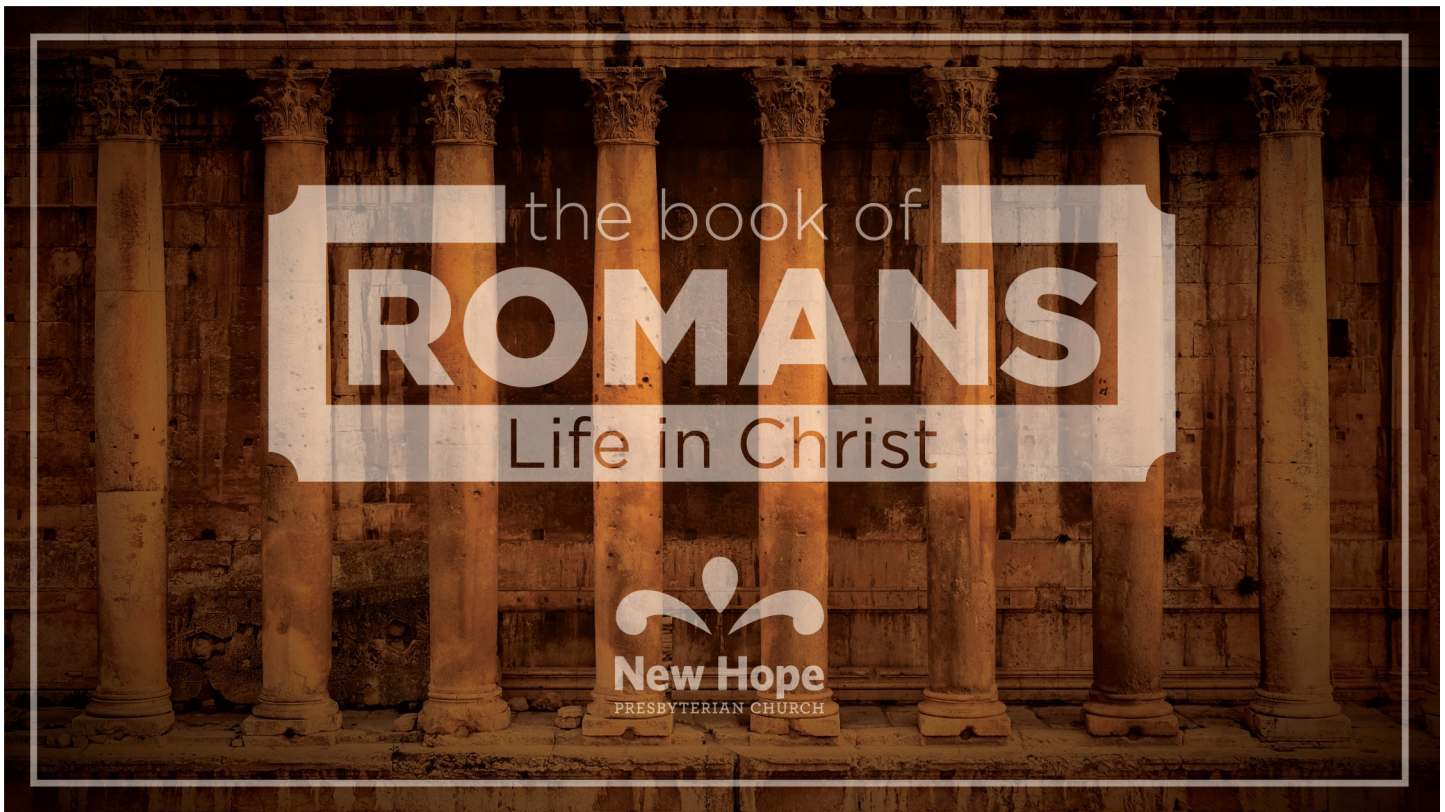




Romans: Life in Christ Study Guide (Week 6)

Reckoned

September 12, 2021

Romans 4:1-25

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' 4Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. 6So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness irrespective of works:

7 'Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

8 blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.'

9 Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, 'Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.' 10How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, 12and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become ‘the father of many nations’, according to what was said, ‘So numerous shall your descendants be.’ 19He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. 20No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22Therefore his faith ‘was reckoned to him as righteousness.’ 23Now the words, ‘it was reckoned to him’, were written not for his sake alone, 24but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

1. In chapter four, Paul uses the example of Abraham in the Old Testament to further explain to his readers the nature of faith. For background, read Genesis 15-17 for more on the story of Abraham and his wife, Sarah.

2. Last week we saw in Romans 3:21-26 that we are justified by grace not by works. According to Romans 4, how is Abraham an example of this?

3. Abraham is often viewed as the father of the Hebrew people. From this passage how do we see that he is the father of all people of faith—Jews *and* Gentiles?

4. Notice the word *reckoned* in this chapter. It occurs eleven times. In 4:3, Paul uses the word quoting Genesis 15:6. What does *reckoned* mean? Look at another translation of this chapter. Is a different word for *reckoned* used?

5. What do you learn about the faith of Abraham and Sarah in vs.16-25? Describe their faith. What can you learn from their faith as you live as a faith-filled person? For example, in v.18 we read: “Hoping against hope he believed ...” The New International Version has it: “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed ...” Does this line resonate with you today? How so?

Reflections on Romans

We southerners tend to say “reckon” more than other English-speaking peoples. “I reckon so,” we say, or “I reckon it is,” or “I reckon I will.” Other than that, the word seems not to be used much nowadays. Paul doesn’t use it the way Southerners use it. He uses it the way an accountant would use it if he were going to “reckon” up a column of figures, or if he were going to do a “reckoning,” or if he were going to “reckon” a sum to someone’s credit. Paul uses the Old Testament word in order to show how Abraham became righteous. Quoting Genesis 15:6 from his Greek translation, Paul says that Abraham was righteous, not because he was faithful or obedient or godly, but because God “reckoned” him as righteous. It really is another way of saying that Abraham was not righteous, was not godly, indeed that he was one of the ungodly until God reckoned him righteous. It is all very startling. It is no longer possible to say that Abraham has anything to his credit. Credit comes to him as a pure, unearned gift from God. This is called grace

From Not Ashamed of the Gospel, by Fleming Rutledge

Next Week: Day of Caring