

## Romans #16

*"Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin ..."* (Rom. 4:7). This citation by Paul from Psalms 32:1f was quoted to describe the man whom God *"reckoneth righteousness apart from works"* (Rom. 4:6). Remember Paul's references to *"works"* in this section alludes to the works of the law and to those who sought to be justified by a system of works. Justification would come in this way if one kept the whole law without a single infraction. Otherwise such a person would be cursed, not blessed. *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law, to do them"* (Gal. 3:10). Further Paul wrote, *"Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident: for the righteous shall live by faith, but the law is not of faith but he that doeth them shall live in them"* (Gal. 3:11-12; Lev. 18:5).

However, let none suppose the words, *"the law is not of faith, but he that doeth then shall live in them"* meant those under the law had no faith. Hebrews eleven explodes that kind of reasoning. It means only that faith was not reckoned in such a person's justification; that would have come by doing ALL the law without a single violation.

An important question is raised when one reads Paul's quotation from David in which he affirms that David described the man *"unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works."* How did Paul know such a man was whom David had in mind? That answer is seen in the "dualism" of the text: *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven; and whose sins are covered."* The subject of David's words had iniquities, sins and yet, although he was a sinner, God did not reckon sins unto him (i.e., require the penalty for sin; death, Rom. 6:23). If God reckoned unto the man righteousness (just), that pronouncement came not by *"works"* (perfect law keeping) but by some other means. That means was *"forgiveness,"* possible because an appropriate sacrifice had been offered for his sins. All understand Christ was that sacrifice. *"Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). God was willing to take into account the faith of man in reckoning him righteous. But, was the blessed man of whom David wrote only from the physical descendants of Abraham? One need only follow Paul's reasoning to learn that answer.

*"Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the*

*uncircumcision also? for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? when he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision ..."* (Rom. 4:10). Because Abraham was yet uncircumcised when it was said, *"And Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness ...,"* God, by reckoning righteousness unto Abraham before he was circumcised, showed that circumcision of itself was not essential for one to be accounted righteous. This assured the blessing of righteousness to all Abraham's seed: those who were physically his seed but who also walked in the steps of his faith as well as those who while not his physical descendants, walked in his faith. Such also are said to be his "sons." *"Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham," "So then, they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham," "For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ ... and if ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise"* (Gal. 3:7, 9, 26, 29). Today we may also be blessed with the faithful Abraham if we walk in his faith and share in the sacrifice his Seed, Jesus Christ, made for all men.

Jim McDonald