

Romans 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man,
unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Analysis

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Paul summons a second witness from Torah: David, Israel's greatest king. The particle kathaper (καθάπερ, "even as") links David's testimony to Abraham's experience—both received imputed righteousness. The verb logizetai (λογίζεται, "reckons/imputes") appears again, Paul's technical term for forensic justification. David speaks of the makarismos (μακαρισμός, "blessedness") of the man to whom God credits righteousness chōris ergōn (χωρὶς ἔργων, "apart from works").

By invoking David, Paul demonstrates this principle spans biblical history—not just the patriarchal period but the monarchy. The quotation that follows (Psalm 32:1-2) describes forgiveness of sins, which Paul equates with imputed righteousness. This is crucial: justification means both non-imputation of sin (negative) and imputation of righteousness (positive). David wrote this psalm after his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, understanding that restoration came not through works but through God's gracious forgiveness.

Historical Context

David held unique authority in Jewish thought as the prototype of the Messiah and author of the Psalms. His testimony that righteousness comes 'without works' would carry enormous weight with Paul's Jewish readers. The psalm quoted was

likely written after Nathan's confrontation (2 Samuel 12), making David's appeal to grace rather than merit deeply personal and credible.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul need two witnesses (Abraham and David) to establish justification by faith, and what does each contribute?
2. What is the relationship between 'imputed righteousness' and 'forgiveness of sins'—are these different aspects of the same reality?
3. How does David's experience of forgiveness after grievous sin illustrate that justification cannot be by works?

Interlinear Text

καθάπερ	καὶ	Δαβὶδ	λέγει	τὸν	μακαρισμὸν	τοῦ
Even as	also	David	describeth	G3588	the blessedness	G3588
G2509	G2532	G1138	G3004		G3108	
ἀνθρώπου	ῳ	ὁ	θεὸς	λογίζεται	δικαιοσύνην	χωρὶς
of the man	unto whom	G3588	God	imputeth	righteousness	without
G444	G3739		G2316	G3049	G1343	G5565
ἔργων						
works						
G2041						

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:30 (Righteousness): But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

2 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 3:14 (Blessing): That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Philippians 3:9 (Righteousness): And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Isaiah 54:17 (Righteousness): No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Psalms 112:1 (Blessing): Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

Ephesians 1:3 (Blessing): Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Romans 4:11 (Righteousness): And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Romans 1:17 (Righteousness): For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.