

LESSON FIVE
THE EXAMPLE AND SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

Scripture Reading:

CHAPTER 4

B. The Example
4:1-25

- 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found?
- 4:2 For if Abraham was justified out of works, he has something to boast in, but not before God.
- 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness."
- 4:4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not accounted according to grace, but according to what is due.
- 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted as righteousness.
- 4:6 Even as David also speaks blessing on the man to whom God accounts righteousness apart from works:
- 4:7 "Blessed are they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered over.
- 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall by no means account sin."
- 4:9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcision *only*, or also upon the uncircumcision? For we say, Faith was accounted to Abraham as righteousness.
- 4:10 How then was it accounted? While he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
- 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had* while in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all those in uncircumcision who believe, that righteousness might be accounted to them also,
- 4:12 And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* in uncircumcision.
- 4:13 For *it was* not through the law *that* the promise *was made* to Abraham or to his seed that he would be the heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith.
- 4:14 For if those of the law are heirs, faith has been made void and the promise has been annulled;
- 4:15 For the law works out wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.
- 4:16 Therefore *the inheritance is* out of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise may be certain to all the seed, not to that which is of the law only, but also to that which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

- 4:17 (As it is written, "I have appointed you a father of many nations") in the sight of God whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls the things not being as being.
- 4:18 He beyond hope believed in hope in order that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken "So shall your seed be."
- 4:19 And not weakening in his faith, he considered his own body as already dead, being about a hundred years old, as well as the deadening of Sarah's womb;
- 4:20 But with regard to the promise of God, he did not doubt in unbelief, but was empowered by faith, giving glory to God
- 4:21 And being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to do.
- 4:22 Therefore also it was accounted to him as righteousness.
- 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake only that it was accounted to him,
- 4:24 But for ours also to whom it is to be accounted, who believe on Him who has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,
- 4:25 Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification.

OUTLINE:

I. The Example of Justification

- A. The Called One—Acts 7:2-4; Gen12:1
- B. The Believing One—Rom. 4:3, 5, 12, 17, 19-20
 - 1. God Who Calls Things Not Being as Being—4:17
 - 2. God Who Gives Life to the Dead—4:17
- C. His Faith Reckoned as Righteousness—4:3, 22
- D. Circumcision Received as a Seal—4:11
- E. Made the Father of Faith—Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9, 29
- F. The Promise Given for Him and His Seed to be the Heirs of the World—Rom. 4:13
- G. The Proof of God's Justification—4:22-25

II. The Subjective Experience of Justification

- A. The Experience of God in Justification
- B. God's Purpose in Justification
- C. The Issue of the Subjective Experience of Justification

QUESTIONS

Section 1:

1. What is the difference between created race and called race?
2. What are the things Abraham left behind in order to follow God's calling absolutely?
3. Has God called you out of anything in order to follow Him more absolutely recently?

Section 2:

1. What does it mean to trust in God?
2. Who is the God in whom we believe? What is the result of our believing?
3. What happens if Christ did not resurrect? Can we still be saved?

Section 3:

1. By saying believing in God means to terminate ourselves and let God be our very being, do we also need to terminate our ability to work for God?
2. Why do we need to return what God has given us back to Him (i.e. put it on the alter)
3. What is subjective, dispositional justification? How can we experience such aspect of justification?

Section 4:

1. Is redemption or justification more important in God's eye? How can God's justification of man fulfil God's purpose?
2. Explain why do we need to offer our enjoyment and experience of Christ back to God.

[Section 1]

I. THE EXAMPLE OF JUSTIFICATION

The book of Romans was written in a solid and substantial way. Although this book covers many doctrines, it was actually written according to facts and experiences. The book of Romans is based on experience. Justification may appear to be a doctrinal matter, but the Apostle Paul, along with the doctrine of justification, gives us a living example of it—the person of Abraham (4:1-25). In this message we will consider Abraham, the example of justification. He is our model, our pattern. The name Abraham means “father of a multitude.” According to the Scriptures, Abraham was the father of both the Jews and the believing Gentiles (Rom. 4:11-12, 16-17; Gal. 3:7-9, 29). Whoever is of faith, whether Jew or Gentile, is a descendant of Abraham.

A. The Called One

Abraham was the called one. Adam was created, but Abraham was called. There is a great difference between being created and being called. The book of Genesis is divided into two main sections: the first section covers the first ten and a half chapters and relates the history of the created race, with Adam as the father and head; the second section covers from the middle of chapter eleven through the end of the book and relates the history of the called race, with Abraham as the father and head.

Romans 1 was written according to the history of the human fall: disapproving of holding God, exchanging God for idols, falling into fornication, and producing every kind of wickedness.

During the terrible process of the fall, mankind exchanged God for idols and completely abandoned Him. In return, God also forsook mankind. God seemed to say, “Since you have given Me up, I will let you go.” The created race gave up God, and God gave up the created race.

However, God called out of this race one man with his wife... God called Abraham by appearing to him as the God of glory (Acts 7:2-3). God did not call him by mere words:

He called him by His glory. Abraham saw the glory of God and was attracted.

Our experience is the same. In a sense, we also have seen the glory of God. When we heard the gospel and it penetrated us, we saw the glory of God... Such an experience is indefinable. No human words can adequately describe what we saw when the gospel penetrated our being. We can only say that the God of glory appeared to us, attracting us and calling us. We, like Abraham, were called by the God of glory.

Abraham was the same as we are. We should not think that we are different from him. We should not appreciate Abraham and depreciate ourselves, for we are all on the same level. We are all Abraham... Although Abraham had been called by God, he did not have the boldness to leave the land of idolatry, forcing God to use Abraham’s father to bring him out of Ur. Abraham was the called one, but his father initiated the actual departure. They left Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in Haran. However, when Abraham still was not bold enough to follow God absolutely, God was forced to take his father. His father died in Haran, and God called Abraham the second time.

Abraham’s first call is recorded in Acts 7:2-4; the second call is found in Genesis 12:1. We should note the difference between these two calls. According to Acts 7:2, God called Abraham out of two things—his country and his kindred. According to Genesis 12:1, another item is added—his father’s house. The first call asked Abraham to leave his country and his people; the second call asked him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father’s house. Abraham and his wife had to go out alone. God took away Abraham’s father and He did not want him to take any other relative with him.

If we consider what Abraham did, we will realize that we are not the only ones who are not absolute in obeying the Lord’s call. Our father Abraham was the first to follow God without being absolute. He felt lonely. He did not want to leave by himself. Thus, he took his nephew Lot with him. This violated God’s call. Although Abraham answered the Lord’s call, his answer, at least in part, disobeyed that call. Likewise, nearly all of us have answered God’s call; yet in our answer we acted

contrary to His call. None of us has answered God's call in an absolute way. Nevertheless, God is absolute. Regardless of how unabsolute we are, God will fulfill His call.

Abraham loved Lot. God used him to discipline Abraham. Eventually, Lot separated from Abraham and Abraham followed God's call absolutely. He no longer had his father or his nephew. He was alone with his wife. He had left his country, his kindred, and his father's house. However, Abraham had to leave one more thing—himself. He held on to himself.

We know Abraham still clung to himself by his reaction to Sarah's suggestion that he have a child by Hagar. Although this proposal was made with a good intention, it was against God's call. Abraham should have exercised discernment and not have listened to his wife... Why did Abraham make such an error? Because he was still in himself. He had forsaken many other things, but he had not forsaken himself.

When did Abraham leave himself? He forsook himself when he was a hundred years old, at which time he considered himself as good as dead. To be sure, every dead person has come out of himself. At the age of a hundred, Abraham looked at himself and said, "I am finished. I am as good as dead." Romans 4:19 says, "he considered his own body already become dead." This indicated that he had finally emerged from himself. He had become a fully called person. Have you been called? Although you are a called person, you have not yet forsaken yourself.

As we have seen, the created race had degenerated to such an extent that they exchanged God for idols. God was unable to do anything with them. As far as God was concerned, the created race under the headship of Adam was hopeless, and He gave it up completely. However, out of that created and fallen race God called out Abraham to be the father and head of a new race, the called race. To which race do we belong—the created race or the called race? We belong to the called race. However, we are the same as our father Abraham. We, like him, are reacting to the Lord's call step by step, not absolutely. We are all in the process of responding to God's call.

[Section 2]

B. The Believing One

The called race becomes the believing race. Abraham was first a called one, then a believing one. He had abandoned everything and had no way to go on except to trust in God. He trusted in God because he did not know where he was going. God had only told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He did not tell Abraham where he was going, forcing him to trust in God. Abraham could say, "I simply trust in God. I go wherever He leads me." If we study the history of Abraham, we will learn that his life was a trusting life, a believing life. God did not expect Abraham to do anything. God seemed to tell him, "Abraham, you have been called by Me. Don't do anything. I'll do everything for you. Just stay with Me. When I move, you move. You must go wherever I go. Don't do anything for yourself or by yourself." This is what it means to trust in God.

Many people have the mistaken impression that believing in the Lord Jesus is simply saying, "Lord Jesus, I believe in You. I take You as my Savior." This is right, but the implications are far-reaching. It means that we must terminate ourselves, admitting that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. Every step and every moment we must trust in Him. I do not know how to do things; I only know how to trust in my Lord. I have been called out of everything that is not God and now I believe into everything that is God. I believe in Him and I believe in all that He has accomplished for me. I believe in what He can do for me and in what He shall do for me. I put my full trust in Him. This is the testimony of the called and believing race. As children of Abraham, the believing father, we are a believing people (Gal. 3:7-9).

1. God Who Calls Things Not Being as Being

In what kind of God did Abraham believe? Who is the God in whom we believe? The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who calls things not being as being (4:17). The God of Abraham calls things not existing as existing, meaning that He creates things out of nothing. God is the Creator. Abraham believed in such a God and applied this God

to his situation. In a sense, Abraham was unable to produce an heir. Nevertheless, God called Isaac into being. Although Isaac had no being, God called him into being. When Isaac did not exist and when there was no possibility for him to exist, God declared, "There shall be an Isaac." Isaac was born: God had called something not being as being. We must believe in the same God, for He is the almighty Creator who calls things not existing as existing.

2. God Who Gives Life to the Dead

The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who gives life to the dead (4:17). This means that God can resurrect the dead. Abraham experienced this when God asked him to offer up Isaac. Abraham obeyed. As Abraham offered Isaac, he believed that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). He believed that God would give life to his son and that he would have his son again in resurrection.

We need to believe in the Lord Jesus in the same way. We believe in God the Creator, who calls things not being as being. We also believe in Him as the life-giver, as the One who can raise the dead. He can create out of nothing and He can give life to the dead.

We must believe in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead. Do not be disappointed by the situation in your locality. Do not say that everything is poor and dead. Such a place is the right place for you and the right place for God. Is it poor? You have a rich God who calls things not being as being. Is it dead? You have a living God who gives life to the dead. Your situation gives an opportunity for God to come in and impart life to the dead. Do not complain. Call on Him and believe in Him... The God in whom I believe is the God who creates things out of nothing and who gives life to the dead. My God does not give life to the living—He gives life to the dead. My situation is an excellent opportunity for God."

C. His Faith Reckoned as Righteousness

This kind of faith is reckoned by God as righteousness (4:3, 22). The more we thus believe in God, the greater is the sensation that God is pleased with us. This is the righteousness of God reckoned to us as the

issue of our faith. Faith is the living Christ Himself. When Christ comes into us as the believing One, He is our faith. Then God reckons our faith as righteousness. Thus, we have both faith and righteousness. This means that we are gaining more of Christ. We have Him as our faith and our righteousness. He is the faith by which we believe in Him and the righteousness which God reckons to us. He is our everything. The more we believe in Him, the more we gain of Him. The more we believe in Him, the more God gives Him to us.

D. Circumcision Received as a Seal

The faith reckoned to Abraham as righteousness did not depend on the outward form of circumcision, because circumcision came later. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision (4:11). Circumcision, as an outward form, was a seal of the inward reality. If we do not have the reality, we should forget the outward form. If we have the reality, we may occasionally need an outward form as the seal. Circumcision was such a seal to Abraham. Moreover, it was a seal to the believing Gentiles, the uncircumcision, of whom Abraham was also the father.

E. Made the Father of Faith

Therefore, Abraham became the father of faith (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9, 29). He was the father of the uncircumcision who have the same faith (4:1) and of the circumcision who walk in the steps of the same faith (4:12). Abraham was the father of two groups of people—the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles. If you believe in the Lord, Abraham is your father. All the believers in Christ are his descendants.

F. The Promise Given for Him and His Seed to be the Heirs of the World

The promise was given to Abraham and his seed that they should be heirs of the world (4:13). This is a great matter. Abraham and his descendants have inherited God and they will also inherit the world. Let other people fight for the control of the world. The world will be ours. After the wars are over, God will say, "Let My people have the world." This promise was not given through the works of the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Who will inherit the earth? Those who have been called and believe in the Lord Jesus, those who have Christ as their faith and as their righteousness. Be assured that the world will be ours. We do not need to fight or strive. We simply need to believe in the mighty acts of God. Every day I read the international news to see what God is doing, especially in the Middle East. It is wonderful to be living in this age, an age of God's activity. God is not only acting on behalf of the Jews, but also on our behalf. One day the world will belong to all the believing heirs of Abraham.

Do you believe this? I have the complete confidence that one day we shall inherit the earth. We should expect to inherit the world. The Bible does assure us that we shall inherit the world. Christ Himself is eager to come back and recover the earth. He is far more interested in the earth than in the heavens. The Lord will return to take the earth not only for Himself, but also for us. We are the heirs of the promise and we shall inherit the world.

G. The Proof of God's Justification

The proof of God's justification is the resurrected Christ (4:22-25)... The resurrected Christ who sits at the right hand of God is the evidence that we have been justified. The redeeming death of Christ as the ground for God to justify us has been fully accepted by God, and Christ has been resurrected from the dead as a proof of this. This is the proof of the justification God has given us.

The death of Christ has fully fulfilled and satisfied God's righteous requirements, so that we are justified by God through His death (3:24). His resurrection is a proof that God is satisfied with His death for us and that we are justified by God because of His death and in Him, the resurrected One, we are accepted before God. Not only so, but, as the resurrected One, He is also in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and is always acceptable to God. Therefore, Romans 4:25 says that He was raised because of our justification.

[Section 3]

II. THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF JUSTIFICATION

A. The Experience of God in Justification

Romans 4 is a deep chapter. We should not understand it just in a superficial way. If we enter into the depths of this chapter, we will see it reveals that adequate, living justification is God's deeper work in calling fallen people out of everything other than God and bringing them back to Himself.

After God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, God trained Abraham to believe in Him. As we have seen, believing in God means to believe into God and to make ourselves one with God. In this kind of believing, a man admits that he is nothing, that he has nothing, and that he can do nothing. He agrees that he must be terminated. Thus, believing in God means to terminate ourselves and to let God be our very being, to let God be all that we should be. From the time we first believe in Him, we should not be anything. We should be completely terminated and allow God to be everything in us. This is the accurate meaning of circumcision. It is inadequate even to ask the Lord to circumcise our heart, for the deep and adequate circumcision is to terminate yourself and allow God to be everything.

When a person has been called by God in this way, the living God transfuses Himself into him. This word transmute is important in describing what transpires at God's calling. The living God spontaneously transfuses Himself into the called one. As a result, he is attracted by God and to God. Unconsciously, some element, some essence of the living God is transfused into him, and he reacts to God by believing in Him. This reaction is faith.

When you heard the gospel of glory regarding the Lord Jesus, you repented. This means that God called you out of everything other than Himself. At that moment, without your even knowing it, the living Christ in His gospel of glory transfused Himself into you (2 Cor. 4:4). Some element of Christ penetrated your being, and you were attracted to Him. You reacted to Him, and your spontaneous reaction was your believing, your faith. The Christ who transfused Himself into you became your faith. Therefore, faith does not originate with us; it comes from God. Faith is not separate from Christ, for it is actually Christ Himself transfusing Himself into us and producing a reaction within us.

Thus, we have the righteousness of God, which is Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. Abraham, our believing father, received the righteousness of God and Isaac. Likewise, we have received both the righteousness of God and Christ, the present Isaac. This is an experience of God calling things not being as being. When we came to God on the day we were saved, we had nothing. Nevertheless, God appeared to us and called things not being as being. Formerly, we did not have the righteousness of God; after a few minutes we had it. Before that time, we did not have Christ; after a few minutes we had Him.

Once we have an experience of the righteousness of God and Christ, we will guard it as a priceless treasure. We will proclaim, "I have the righteousness of God. I have Christ." However, one day God will intervene and say, "Offer this on the altar." Will you do it? Not one out of a hundred Christians is willing. Instead they say, "O Lord, don't ask me to do this. I would do anything else, but not this." Nevertheless, we must remember the reactions which go back and forth between man and God. The righteousness of God and Christ are ours—these came as God's reaction to our faith. Now we must return this reaction to God by offering it to Him. After we react in this way, God will react again. God's first reaction was to call things not being as being. His second reaction is to give life to the dead. This is profound.

According to Romans 4, the ultimate issue of this series of reactions is the resurrected Christ. This resurrected Christ is now in the heavens as a strong proof that God has been satisfied and that we have been justified. The resurrected Christ is in the third heavens at the right hand of God as conclusive evidence that all of God's requirements have been satisfied and that we have been thoroughly and adequately justified. However, this resurrected Christ is not only in the heavens, but also within us to impart life that we may have a life of justification. Therefore, justification is not merely a positional matter; it becomes a dispositional matter. The death of Christ gave us a positional justification, and the resurrected Christ in the heavens is a proof of this. Now the resurrected Christ also lives inside us, reacting within us and living out a life of dispositional justification. Eventually,

we are justified both in position and in disposition. We not only have an objective justification, but a subjective justification as well. We may now live such a subjective, dispositional justification.

This justification is the real, living circumcision. What is circumcision? Circumcision means to terminate ourselves and to come into God: it terminates us and it germinates God into us. The Jews do not care for the inward reality of circumcision; they only care for the outward form, the practice of cutting off a piece of flesh. This is not circumcision in the eyes of God. In God's eyes, circumcision means to cut off yourself, terminate yourself, and allow God to germinate Himself within you to be your life that you may have a new beginning. This circumcision is the outward seal of the real, inward justification.

Abraham experienced God as the One who calls things not being as being. By the birth of Isaac Abraham experienced God in this way. Furthermore, by the resurrection of Isaac, Abraham experienced God as the One who gives life to the dead. There are two kinds of Isaac: the first is Isaac born; the second is Isaac resurrected. The God in whom Abraham believed had these two aspects. He believed in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead.

[Section 4]

B. God's Purpose in Justification

The common understanding of justification among most Christians is this: we are sinful, God is righteous and holy, and there is no way for us to contact Him or for Him to contact us. Thus, Christ died on the cross and accomplished redemption by shedding His blood. Under His blood we are redeemed, and God has a righteous position to justify us. All of this is absolutely correct. However, the Apostle Paul did not conclude the section on justification at this point, which is reached at the end of chapter 3... His concern was deeper than redemption—he cared about God's purpose. Redemption is not God's purpose; it is a process to reach God's purpose. In Romans 3 we see redemption bringing forth God's justification, but we do not see God's purpose. What was God's purpose in justification? In answering this question, Paul

used Abraham's history as an example, as a picture to explain what no human words can explain. If we study the picture in chapter 4, we will realize that it is deeper, more profound, and more far-reaching than chapter 3.

We thought that justification was merely a matter related to sins. However, when we read Genesis 15 where Abraham's faith was reckoned by God as righteousness, we find no mention of sin. Sin was not involved. The concern was over a seed which would become a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Abraham was not called out by God simply because God had mercy on his sinful condition. God did not say, "Abraham, you are so pitiful. I do not want you to go to hell. In My mercy I come to call you out of your fallen state." That was not the issue at all. In Genesis 1 we are told that God made man in His own image to express Himself and that this man was a corporate man, not an individual man. God created a corporate man that included both male and female. According to Genesis 5:2, both Adam and Eve are called Adam, signifying that God created a corporate man to express Him and exercise His dominion. In other words, God wanted to have a kingdom as a sphere in which to express His glory. Although this was God's purpose, man fell away from it. Once man had turned away from God, had been distracted from God's purpose, and had been occupied with other things, he fell deeply into sin. Nevertheless, the involvement in Genesis 15 is not sin, but how God's purpose can be fulfilled. It is not a question of being saved, but of accomplishing God's purpose. As long as you are involved in the fulfillment of God's purpose, you will be saved.

God's justification is not primarily for man's salvation; it is for the fulfillment of His purpose. Why has God chosen you? He did not choose you primarily for salvation, He chose you for His purpose. Why has God called you? He has not called you for heaven. He has called you for the fulfillment of His purpose. As long as you are involved with God's purpose, your salvation is secure. However, if you only care for your salvation, you may miss the mark of God's purpose. Salvation is not an end in itself; it is for God's purpose. Thus, God's justification is for the fulfillment of His purpose.

There is no mention of sin in Genesis 15. God told Abraham, "Look at the heavens and count the stars. Your seed will be like the stars in the sky." Abraham believed, and his faith was counted by God as righteousness. God's justification of Abraham was unrelated to sin. It was totally involved with God's purpose, with having a seed to produce a kingdom for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This is why the Apostle Paul in Romans 4, after referring to Genesis 15 where Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness, mentions the promise given to Abraham and his seed of inheriting the world (4:13). What does inheriting the world have to do with justification? Why does Paul mention this in chapter 4? Abraham and his heirs must inherit the world for the sake of God's kingdom, and God's kingdom is for His purpose. Romans 4 tells us that God's justification is not for going to heaven or merely for our salvation. Justification enables Abraham and all his believing heirs to inherit the world and to exercise the dominion of God on this earth as mentioned in Genesis 1. If we only had Romans 3, we would say that God's justification, based upon Christ's redemption, is for our salvation. Chapter 4, however, clearly unveils that God's justification of His chosen ones is not merely for their salvation; it is purposely for them to inherit the world that they may exercise God's dominion on the earth.

C . The Issue of the Subjective Experience of Justification

After Abraham received his Isaac, he was completely satisfied with him. Likewise, when we have an experience of Christ individually, we are very satisfied with Him saying, "A few years ago I only knew the righteousness of God. I never experienced that the righteousness of God is Christ Himself. Now I experience and enjoy Christ as the righteousness of God." However, as you are enjoying your individual Christ, God appears, as He did to Abraham, saying, "Offer your Isaac to Me." Perhaps the Lord will tell you to go to the church. This troubles you. You reply, "I don't care for the church. As long as I have my experience of Christ, isn't that enough?" This kind of response proves that you are unwilling to present your Isaac on the altar. However, if you offer your individual Isaac to God, God will react to you once again, and

thousands of Isaacs will return to you. Abraham offered one Isaac, but he received thousands of descendants in return. These descendants formed the kingdom, the nation of Israel, for the purpose of exercising God's dominion. This is why Paul said that Abraham and his heirs will inherit the earth. The Body life is implied here. In chapter 12 we find the Body: "We who are many are one body in Christ." In chapter 14 Paul interprets the Body as being the kingdom of God, telling us that we must receive all the brothers for the sake of God's kingdom. Romans 14:17 says that the kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The body life is the kingdom of God for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

One day the God of glory came to us through the preaching of the gospel. We were attracted, convinced, and began to appreciate Him. During that time, the God of glory transfused some element of His divine being into us, and we believed in Him spontaneously. Then we said, "O God, I am a sinner. I thank You that Your Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for me." We were able to say this because the living Christ had worked within us to be our believing ability. After that, if someone would have advised us against believing in Christ, we would have found it impossible not to believe in Him. Nothing can take this belief out of us because it is actually the living Christ working in us and reacting to God. Immediately after we reacted to God in this way, He reacted to us, justifying us. Then we had the sense that we were forgiven and justified by God. We had peace and joy. Following this, we all determined to do good—to behave ourselves, to love our wives, and to submit to our husbands. All we produced was Ishmael. Then we realized that we needed to be terminated, to be circumcised that God might work in us to produce the present Isaac, who is Christ, the reality of the righteousness of God. Once we have this Christ, we must offer Him to God that we may receive Him back in resurrection. The result of this is the kingdom, the church life. This is the Body of Christ.

Paul wrote Romans 4 because he wanted to show that God's justification is for the fulfillment of His purpose. God's purpose is to have the one Body, which is the kingdom, to express Him and to exercise His dominion on the earth. Therefore, Romans 4 lays the

foundation for Romans 12—16, where we see the practical Body life, church life, and kingdom life.