

This suggests an alternative scenario, something like the following:

- (1) God sees that we have no righteousness, but that we do have faith.
- (2) God credits us with faith through which Christ's righteousness is imputed to us.
- (3) God credits a right standing to us on the basis of Christ's righteousness.

But if our own imperfect works and our own imperfect faith are not credited to us as though they were righteousness, and to the contrary, if Christ's atoning work is credited to us as righteousness, then how shall we understand the statements of verses 3, 5, 9, and 22? If faith is not the basis of our justification (or of Abraham's), then what role does faith play in God's declaring us righteous?

In Romans 1:17 ("a righteousness that is by faith"), 3:22 ("this righteousness from God comes through faith"), and 5:1 ("since we have been justified through faith"), faith is portrayed as the means or instrument through which God joins us to Christ's atoning work, on the basis of which atonement He declares us righteous. Since Christ's righteousness and death, not our faith, is the basis of our justification, then I would suggest that we translate verses 3, 5, 9, and 22 as follows:

verse 3 -- "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him unto righteousness" (i.e., God declared him righteous through his faith)

verse 5 -- "his faith is credited unto righteousness" (i.e., God declares him righteous through his faith)

verse 9 -- "faith was credited to Abraham unto righteousness" or "faith unto righteousness was credited to Abraham" (i.e., God declared Abraham righteous through his faith, or, faith through which God declared Abraham righteous was credited to him.)

verse 22 -- "And therefore it was credited to him unto righteousness" (i.e., God declared Abraham righteous through his faith)

Thus this fourth chapter is a chapter on imputation, specifically the crediting of righteousness to those who believe in the Savior and salvation that God provides.

But now we must ask a pointed question. If Abraham is not merely an illustration, but an example of justification by faith, does this imply that Abraham was saved by faith?

Abraham was not only saved through the instrumentality of faith; he was saved on the basis of Christ's atoning work. That is, the basis and instrument of salvation were Christ's redemption and faith, respectively.

That this is not strictly and solely a Reformed view of salvation during the Old Testament period may be seen in the doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Seminary, Article V. The statement declares: "We believe that according to the 'eternal purpose' of God (Eph. 3:11) salvation in the divine reckoning is always