

Thought Questions for Romans 4

4:1-8 — What do we learn about works?

4:9-12 — What do we learn about circumcision?

4:13-15 — What do we learn about the Law?

4:16-17 — How do these verses compare and contrast with thoughts in Sirach 44:19-21¹:

¹⁹ Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations,
and no one has been found like him in glory.

²⁰ He kept the law of the Most High,
and entered into a covenant with him;
he certified the covenant in his flesh,
and when he was tested he proved faithful.

²¹ Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath
that the nations would be blessed through his offspring;
that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth,
and exalt his offspring like the stars,
and give them an inheritance from sea to sea
and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

¹ Sirach was a Jewish teacher who wrote in Jerusalem between 200 and 180 B.C. His writings are not a part of the Hebrew Scriptures, and so are not accepted with full authority by Jews or by Protestants. His writings do appear in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) and are considered Scripture by Roman Catholics. I think what Sirach has to say here is interesting just because he suggests a different way that Abraham's example would have been thought of in Paul's day.

4:18-25 — What stands out about Abraham’s faith in this paragraph? Throughout Rom 4, Paul has been suggesting that we need to have the “faith of Abraham” (see 4:12, 16). And Paul says that God declared Abraham righteous not just for his sake, but for ours as well (4:23-24). Don’t we have to ask ourselves: what are the challenges to my faith? how can mine be more like his?