

1. Unashamed—Romans 1:16 (This was the goal of Paul for the Roman church—to bring this diverse group together based on the work of Christ; to enable them to see beyond their prejudices; pride; stubborn self-will to allow God to bring about in them a transformation into a new life; a reorientation of identity in Jesus; and a reordering of their life within a new community, the church. Only by doing this could they really, truly be unashamed of the gospel. So to get them there he teaches—rich, wonderful, heavenly truth and values. First he breaks them down—as we noted in past sermons—all are sinners, no one is superior to anyone else regardless of ethnicity or any other measure, stop playing those games and judging each other—foolishness and a waste of time; if not for Christ all would receive the wages of sin—which is death. So get over yourself—first step to becoming fully unashamed)
2. Father Abraham (Now he turns his attention to the rebuild—kind of like a boot camp approach—and he starts with Abraham. For Jews he was a source of pride—someone they pointed to even to demonstrate their ethnic superiority when it came to God. But Paul was having none of that—instead he reframes Abraham as not just the father of Jewish faith, but the father of all faith—including that of the non-Jews who come to Christ. Incredibly he teaches they are heirs to Abraham as well. Not only would this deflate Jewish boasting but completely redefine Abraham for all generations. This bit of teaching might not mean much to us, but it was quite radical and revolutionary then. His overall point is to get them to understand how God’s will was always the inclusion of everyone—well beyond the Jewish people—into his kingdom and that that—this wonderful, diverse, functioning body of Christ would stand as the beacon to the world—people, like Abraham, unashamed of their God and of each other)
3. (One of the key verses of this context is) Romans 4:18-25
4. “But Also For Us” (What was good for Abraham was good for us—because he also had to grow to be unashamed—amazing how text references him as not wavering when we know he did, but that was the same growth challenges we face, within ourselves, on our journey to being unashamed. Abraham overcame in it—his doubt, fears, shame—to be remembered through the Spirit of God just how Paul teaches here. We have our own challenges to face—but like Abraham we can overcome them. How? By having)
 - a. Faith beyond the moment (for him it was about having the promised son; for the Romans it was about looking past their differences)
 - b. Fully trusting in God (to do the right thing. For him it was finally giving up and buying in that God would provide the son; for the Romans it was finally letting go of prejudices and judgmental spirits so that God could reshape them)
 - c. Completely invest in Jesus (Abraham did in a way—having the gospel preached to him in advance—Galatians 3:8; for the Romans it meant understanding that justification--see ch. 5—comes only in him and then allowing him to recreate a new life for them---**now all of these apply for us; unless we are able to do the same—we will never move beyond ourselves to fully embraced the unashamed life. We will continue to be stuck in the tension between the world and God; unable to fully ignite our gifts, realize transformation, and prioritize the new life and new community in Jesus—period end of story. And what that looks like is a life half-lived for God; a continuing struggle of false starts; never really committing to the new life; never prioritizing the new community;--a constant battle with old, sinful habits that we have never defeated in Jesus; and as a result a faith that never fully forms and a life that cannot truly be unashamed.**)
5. (And that is a life of guilt and continually falling short—why live it when) Salvation, Reconciliation, and Justification is Found in Jesus—Romans 5:1-11 (talk about kicking against the thorns! What do we gain by being ashamed—by not following Abraham into full-fledged faith? The Roman church gained strife, struggle and separation—no future there. Why live in spiritual failure when we do not have to?—be unashamed!)