



Romans 4:1-25

THE EXAMPLE OF FAITH

Paul has both expounded his gospel of God's righteousness, that is, of justification by faith (3:21-26) and defended it against its critics (3:27-31). In doing so, he has also insisted that it is attested by OT Scripture (1:2; 3:21, 31). So the next step in his argument is to supply an OT precedent and example. He chooses Abraham, Israel's most illustrious patriarch, supplemented by David, Israel's most illustrious king. ...Abraham and David show that justification by faith is God's one and only way of salvation, first in the OT as well as in the New, and, secondly for Jews as well as for Gentiles.

...There seems to have been two reasons for Paul's choosing Abraham as his main example. The first is that he was the founding father of Israel, the rock from which they were cut, the favored recipient of God's covenant and promises. The second reason is that Abraham was held in the highest esteem by the Rabbis as the epitome of righteousness and even the special friend of God. They took it for granted that he had been justified by works of righteousness.

—John R. W. Stott

In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul has presented the "bad news" that we are all under condemnation because of sin. In 3:21-31, he shifts to proclaim the "good news" that God has offered salvation freely, by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ.

- **Justification.** We are declared righteous before God.
- **Redemption.** We are set free from the bondage of sin.
- **Propitiation.** God's wrath against our sin has been satisfied.

Paul says that the OT Scriptures bear witness to this truth of justification by faith (3:21-22). In chapter 4, he proves it by pointing to the example of Abraham (along with King David) and by giving a detailed exposition of Genesis 15:6.

*Abram believed the Lord,
and the Lord credited it as righteousness to him. (NET)*

SALVATION IS BY FAITH...

- **NOT BY _____ (4:1-8).**

God's righteousness is given as a _____ by God's grace, not as a wage for work that someone has done.

Abraham trusted in God's goodness not in his own.

David exalted in God's grace for not imputing his sin to his account but instead giving him full forgiveness (Ps. 32:1-2).

Believe. Hebrew, *aman*, "to trust, believe in, stand firm in."
Greek, *pisteuo*, "to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, trust."

The best definition I can find of faith is the dependence upon the veracity of another. ...Faith says amen to everything that God says. If God says it, Faith says I believe it; Faith says amen to it.

—Dwight L. Moody

Credit. Greek, *logizomai*, "to reckon, compute, calculate; (used as a business term) to impute, credit to one's account."

If we compare other verses in which the same grammatical construction is used in Genesis 15:6 we arrive at the conclusion that the [crediting] of Abram's faith as righteousness means "to account him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him."

—Douglas Moo

God's forgiveness is the going forth of God's infinite tenderness toward the object of His mercy. It is God folding the sinner, as the returning prodigal was folded, to His bosom. Such a one is blessed indeed!

—William Newell

- **NOT BY _____ (4:9-12).**

Abraham received God’s righteousness, by faith, _____ he was circumcised (cf. Gen. 15:6 w/ 17:1-11).

Circumcision did not make him righteous but was a _____ of the righteousness that he had already received from God.

Abraham is the true father of all those who _____ in God—whether uncircumcised or circumcised (cf. John 8:33-58).

- **NOT BY _____ (4:13-15).**

Abraham received the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant—the land, the seed, and the blessing—long before the giving of the law (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:7-21; 17:1-8; 22:15-18; cf. Galatians 3:17-18).

The Law (the Mosaic Covenant) confronts us with the absolute righteousness of God, exposes our sin, reveals His wrath, and drives us to our need for His forgiving grace (Exod. 19-40; cf. Gal. 3:19-24).

BECAUSE GOD’S SALVATION IS BY FAITH ALONE...

- **God’s _____ is magnified (4:16a).**

- **God’s righteousness is available to _____ (4:16b-17).**

- **Our hope is firmly planted in God’s _____ and His _____ not in the circumstances around us (4:18-22).**

Abraham saw the practical impossibility of being the “father of many nations” as a childless 100 year old man with a 90 year old wife.

But he trusted in God and in His promise—knowing that God’s power far exceeds our human limitations and circumstances.

His faith was strengthened as he focused on God, giving Him glory.

- **Anyone today can be declared righteous before the holy God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ if they put their trust in Him (4:23-25).**

Faith is helplessness reaching out in total dependence upon God.

—Robert H. Mounce

Law and promise belong to different categories of thought, which are incompatible. Law-language (“you shall”) demands our obedience, but promise-language (“I will”) demands our faith. What God said to Abraham was not “Obey this law and I will bless you,” but “I will bless you; believe my promise.”

—John R. W. Stott

Let us also remember that the condition of us all is the same with that of Abraham. All things around us are in opposition to the promises of God. He promises immortality; we are surrounded with mortality; he declares that he counts us just; we are covered with sins. ...What then is to be done? We must with closed eyes pass by ourselves and all things connected with us, that nothing may hinder or prevent us from believing that God is true.

—John Calvin

Although faith goes beyond reason, it always has a firmly rational basis. In particular, faith is believing or trusting a person, and its reasonableness depends on the reliability of the person being trusted. —John R.W. Stott

*Mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, “It shall be done!”*

—Charles Wesley

Saving faith is a “trust transfer.” It is the removing of one’s hopes and trust from other things to place them on God as Savior.

—Timothy Keller