

Cornerstone Bible Church

Faith of Abraham

(Romans 4:13-25)

Survey of Romans part 13

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Introduction: Tim Keller on Romans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P8QiUAEHYk>

Play until 2 :22



Perhaps Romans has been boring to some of you, but that is not the book of Romans fault, but my fault.

Hopefully these lessons will at least make you curious about Romans and provoke you to pursue your own delving into it.

It is impossible for me to extract and explain in these lessons, the riches of this epistle, but there are plenty of good resources to explore and get to know this book.

Text: Romans 4:13-25

“¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

¹⁵for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

¹⁷(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

Text: Romans 4:13-25

¹⁸In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." ¹⁹And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

²²Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

²³Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Today's lesson in one slide

CONTEXT: Paul is vindicating his gospel of justification by grace through faith, without the works of the Law, as an Old Testament teaching; the gospel, was always the plan.

SUMMARY:

1. The promise to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was by faith.
2. It could not be through the Law, because the Law brings wrath.
3. Justification is by faith, so that it might be by grace.
4. Because justification is by faith, it could reach Abraham's descendants.
5. Abraham's faith was not on the promise, but on the God who promised.
6. Just as Abraham's faith justified him, so are those who trust God in Jesus.

OUTLINE:

1. The **Premise** of Righteousness by Faith (verses 13-14)
2. The **Reason** why righteousness has to be by faith (verses 15-16)
3. The **Paradigm** of Abraham's Faith (verses 18-21)
4. The **Results** of Abraham's Faith (verses 22-25)

1. The premise of righteousness by faith (verses 13-14)

- a. Paul restates that the promise is **not a mixture** of law and faith
- b. The promise to Abraham (and to his descendants) was that **he (Abraham)** would be “heir” of the world.
- c. The Jews thought this spoke of them as a nation, but Paul says the **promise was to Abraham**.
- d. In Galatians, he clarified it would not be to his seeds (as if many) but to his seed (singular), referring to Christ.
- e. Verse 14 seals the argument. “**If those of the Law are heirs**” namely the Jews, then **the promise is nullified**, because nobody can keep the Law.

2. Why does righteousness have to be by grace through faith (15-16)

- a. Because the **Law brings wrath**.
- b. Paul already explained this: the Law can only be broken to become an instrument of condemnation, **nobody can keep it**.
- c. The promise was by faith and not by the keeping of the Law, because **when Abraham received the promise, there was no Law**; therefore, he could not have broken it to nullify the promise.
- d. It had to be by faith, **so that it could reach Abraham's descendants**, otherwise Abraham's breaking of the Law would have nullified the covenant right there and then.

2. Why does righteousness have to be by grace through faith (15-16)

e. This is a subtle way for Paul to expose that not even Abraham had it all together and that he was a sinner too, that's why God had to deal with Abraham in Grace through Faith.

3. The paradigm of Abraham's faith (verses 18-21)

Abraham's faith, **was not just a mere intellectual assent**, but it involved leaning on the God who promised, despite the circumstances.

¹⁸In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." ¹⁹And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

3. The paradigm of Abraham's faith (verses 18-21)

- a. **Abraham's faith was based on hope not facts.** Cf. Hebrews 11:1 definition “**the assurance of things not seen and the conviction of things hoped for.**”
- b. There's a **fundamental difference** between being encouraged by providence, versus being encouraged in faith.
- c. The former gains encouragement from God's blessings, the latter is encouraged from God's promises.
- d. It is easy to believe when things are going well.
- b. **I presume Paul wanted to create an effect in the hearers** (and readers) when he wrote “parV evlpi,da evpV evlpi,di **par elpida ep elpidi**” (it sounds cool doesn't it?). Well, that's the point!

3. The paradigm of Abraham's faith (verses 18-21)

- c. The play on prepositions (lit.: from hope over hope) means something like “*piling hope on top of hope*” Abraham believed.
- d. From God's promise when Abram was 75 years old to its actual fulfilment, 25 long and difficult years went by.
- e. His faith did not debilitate because of the circumstances. vs 19. His body was a 100 years old and Sarah's womb was barren when she was young, now it was barren and old.
- f. Again Paul uses **terms that create an impact** in the hearer: “Abraham's faith did not become *ill*, in light of the *deadness* of his old body and the *deadness* of Sarah's womb.”
- g. *Faith in God, looks beyond the circumstances!*

3. The paradigm of Abraham's faith (verses 18-21)

- h. Verse 20 “Abraham's faith grew stronger”... rather than wavering in unbelief at the circumstances:
- a) Sarah was barren.
 - b) They were old when the promise was given.
 - c) The years went by and nothing happened.
 - d) But Abraham looked to God's promise; his faith grew stronger.

Side note: what about Abimelec, Pharaoh and Hagar? Abraham was a frail sinner like us, but he considered the promise and this gave glory to God.

The passage is not about Abraham, but about the God who promised to bless him in spite of himself.

We do not need to apologize for the blunders of Bible characters!
The Book is not about them, but about their Savior

3. The paradigm of Abraham's faith (verses 18-21)

- i. Verse 21 “**being fully assured**” ... Abraham believed in the trustworthiness and the power of Him who promised.

- j. Abraham believed that God was able to keep His promise, both *morally* (God did not lie) and *efficiently* (God had the power to accomplish His purpose).

4. The results of Abraham's faith (verses 22-25)

²²Therefore also IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

²³Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

4. The results of Abraham's faith (verses 22-25)

- a. Verse 22 **His faith was reckoned** (imputed / accounted for) as **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. **Abraham received a clean record** – despite his bad heart by nature – by grace through faith
- b. Verse 23 But not just Abraham received this “reckoning of grace” but those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. This is the central tenet and core of the Gospel.
- c. That phrase contains it all namely, that **God sent His Son to live perfectly and to die on our behalf.**
- d. He was raised as proof of his sinless life and of the Father accepting His sacrifice.
- e. Verse 24 “**delivered for our transgressions**” and “**raised because of our justification**”

CONCLUSION:

1. **Stop seeking validation** outside of the gospel promise
2. **Justification is a record**, it is obtained by believing God's promise to those who believe the promise of the Gospel in His Son.
3. **Sin is fought in the dynamics of understanding our acceptance in the Gospel of Grace.** As long as we try to obtain validation with God and others, through Law performance, we will be kicking against the goad, because *"The Law produces wrath."*
4. For us to fight anger, frustration, envy, depression, lust and all of its sisters and cousins, we must consider the promise of God to those who believe. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life, and anyone who lives and believes in me, will not perish forever."

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