

"The Doctrine of Justification"

Romans 3:21-5:11

Part 10

Introduction: In our study of Romans we are currently looking at the Doctrine of Justification. Starting in Romans 4 Paul is showing his readers three points concerning justification and in doing so he has pointed to Abraham as the example of saving faith.

1. **Abraham was justified by Faith and not works. (4:1-8)**
2. **Abraham was justified by Grace and not Law. (4:9-15)**

In these verses Paul, has pointed to Abraham as the example of how we are justified. Abraham was justified by Faith and not by works according to the Scriptures.

Romans 4:3

³ *For what saith the scripture?* *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

Paul also made it clear that Abraham was declared to be justified before he was circumcised.

Romans 4:9-10

⁹ *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

¹⁰ *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

From all of this which we have looked at we can conclude that Abraham was not justified by the Law for he lived before the Law was given and he was not justified by any religious ritual or rite for he was justified before he was circumcised. So, justification is not by keeping the Law nor is it by any religious practice, but it is by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. It is by GRACE through FAITH PLUS NOTHING.

**I. Abraham's Justification
Part 5**

Now we come to the 3rd point concerning justification.

3. **Abraham was justified by the power of God not human effort.**

Notice Romans 4:16

We looked at this verse briefly the last time we were together, but I want to refresh our memories on what Paul has written here. This verse sums up what Paul just said in the previous verses. Salvation is by grace through faith and not by any works and because of that the promise is SURE. In other words, our salvation rests upon the faithfulness of God. It is not based upon how religious we are, and it is not based upon us keeping any part of the Law. When we rest our faith in Jesus Christ then we are justified, and the promise of eternal life is secure for the believer because God has promised it to us who believe.

John 3:14-16

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Our responsibility is to believe it is then God's responsibility to keep His Word. The only way that we could ever lose our salvation would be for God to choose not to keep His promises and that will never happen.

Hebrews 6:17-18

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability (unalterable/unchangeable) of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable (unalterable/unchangeable) things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

The two UNALTERABLE things which the writer is speaking of here in Hebrews is God's Promise and God's Oath. God made a promise to Abraham that from him would come the Promised Seed and God confirmed it by an oath which we looked at the last time we were together. The Covenant was with Abraham, but it did not depend upon the faithfulness of Abraham, but it rested completely upon the faithfulness of God.

The same is also true of our salvation. There was a Covenant made at the cross over 2000 years ago between the Father and the Son. We are brought into the New Covenant by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. God has promised that all who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior will be given eternal life and since it is impossible for God to lie the promise is SURE to all Jews who believe and to all Gentiles who believe.

Notice the words of **Matthew Poole**:

"If the promise "were of the law, it would be unsure and uncertain, because of man's weakness, who is not able to perform it."

To reiterate, if the promise were based on our works, we could never be certain it would be fulfilled, because we would never know when we had done enough "good works." And of course we could never do enough to merit God's favor nor earn salvation."

Notice the words of **Steven Cole**:

"If salvation were based on our good deeds, how could we ever know when we've done enough? This is the problem with the Roman Catholic system of adding our works to faith in order to accumulate enough merit for heaven. When have you done enough service to the poor? When have you given enough money? When have you been honest enough? When have you demonstrated that your love for God is pure and fervent enough? When have you arrived at loving your neighbor as you in fact love yourself? If you base salvation on good works, you'll always be plagued with doubts.

*The word **SURE** describes the promise which is like an legal guarantee and thus is a (stable) promise we can rely on even when our (unstable) feelings might cause us to do otherwise. Furthermore, the original Greek text places **SURE** before **the promise** which adds emphasis to the assurance that this promise can be relied upon. No bank failures here, beloved!"*

Now as we step into the next verses Paul is going to illustrate how salvation is by the power of God and not by the power of man.

Notice Romans 4:17

In the beginning of this verse Paul appeals to the testimony of the Old Testament. When Abram departed out of Haran he was 75 years old and he had no children. Sarai was 65 years old and she was barren. At the age of 86 Abram fathered Ishmael through Hagar but Ishmael was not the Promised Seed for the Promised Seed would come through Sarai. In Genesis 17 we read of God giving details to Abram.

Genesis 17:1-6, 15-19

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

² *And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.*

³ *And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,*

⁴ *As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.*

⁵ *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

⁶ *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.*

¹⁵ *And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.*

¹⁶ *And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.*

¹⁷ *Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?*

¹⁸ *And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!*

¹⁹ *And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.*

So, Abraham is 99 years old and Sarah is 89 years old and God gives to Abraham a promise that he and Sarah will have a son and they were to name him Isaac.

Notice Romans 4:17 again.

Abraham believed God based upon two points.

1. **God is able to quicken the dead.** - Abraham believed that God had the power to resurrect the dead. Abraham's body was sexually dead as well as Sarah's womb but Abraham believed that God could give life to both and they would be able to procreate.
2. **God calleth those things which be not as though they were.** - Abraham believed that from his seed and Sarah's womb God could cause a conception to take place.

Notice Romans 4:18

Abraham had hope even when he and Sarah had nothing at all to contribute. His faith was not in his ability to father a son but his faith was in God who had made the promise.

Notice the words of **Stedman**:

"You may leave this service this morning and go out to the parking lot with the utmost faith that when you get into your car and drive down the driveway and into the street your car is going to work just as it was working when you parked it there this morning. But maybe, while we were sitting here this morning, someone took off the hubcaps and removed the lug bolts from the front wheels of your car, and then put the hubcaps back on so you cannot see any difference. That may have happened. And though you have the utmost confidence that your car is going to work properly, when you get onto the street and turn the corner, sooner or later the front wheels are going to fall off. You might end up dead -- killed by faith! On the other hand, some of you who have been worried a bit by what I have just said may go out to your car after this service and take off the hubcaps and examine the lug bolts to make sure they are there. And even then, not too confidently, you may start your car and drive it rather timidly down the driveway, still thinking that something might go wrong and it may fall apart. But if no one has tampered with it, you are perfectly safe -- even though you have little faith -- because the object of your faith is strong. That is why you should not talk about your faith; talk instead about the God in whom your faith is fixed!"

Abraham knew that he and Sarah had nothing to contribute to the conception which God had promised for they were both sexually dead. But his faith was not in his ability or Sarah's ability, but his faith was in God for he knew God was able to resurrect the dead and to bring about that which is humanly impossible. The Object of Abraham's faith was God and he knew God could do the impossible.

Genesis 18:10-14

¹⁰ *And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.*

¹¹ *Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.*

¹² *Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*

¹³ *And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?*

¹⁴ **Is any thing too hard for the LORD?** *At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.*

Abraham knew there was nothing that was too hard for the Lord so again, GOD was the Object of his faith and that is how he could have hope when there was no hope.

Notice Romans 4:19-20

Here in this verse we see that Abraham's faith was strong regardless of the circumstances. His faith therefore brought glory to God. The idea in verse 20 is that Abraham's faith grew over time. His faith was not perfect as he followed God but as the years went by he learned that no matter what the situation he could have faith in God.

Notice the words of **Steven Cole**:

"Abraham's faith was solidly God-centered. He didn't believe in himself. He didn't have faith in faith. He wasn't an optimist who practiced positive thinking. He didn't think, "If Sarah and I just visualize the goal and try again, we'll succeed." Rather, looking away from the circumstances and away from himself, he believed God and His promise, so that God got the glory. In Romans 1:21, we saw that the fundamental sin of the human race was, "even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give thanks." But here, by way of contrast, Abraham grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. This teaches us that our faith should grow. Weak faith (or little faith) is still faith, but we should grow strong in faith. How do we grow in faith? The key is to grow in your knowledge of the object of our faith, namely, God. Faith is only as good as its object."

Conclusion/Application:

There are so many applications here, but time does not permit looking at each one, so we shall touch on a few.

1. **Pertaining to salvation-** In all of this we can see a wonderful picture of saving faith. Abraham and Sarah were "dead" and they were unable to bring about the Promised Messiah on their own. But Abraham had faith in God and for that reason he was justified.

Notice Romans 4:21-22

Abraham received imputed righteousness.

In the same way every person on this earth is spiritually dead. We are born in sin and so we are spiritually dead at birth.

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Being spiritually dead we have absolutely nothing to contribute to our salvation. But God made a promise that if we would rest our faith in Jesus Christ that He would give to us eternal life. Therefore, when we rest our faith in Christ God's righteousness is imputed to our account.

Romans 3:22

²² *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

Abraham could do NOTHING to bring about his salvation and we can contribute NOTHING to bring about our salvation. We are to simply rest our faith in the One who can quicken the dead and bring about the impossible.

2. **Pertaining to growth** - As Abraham aged his faith grew because he came to know more about God and we can see the pinnacle of his faith in Genesis 22 when he went to Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac. The application for our lives is that as we age our faith should get stronger and stronger. The more we learn of God over the years the stronger our faith should become. But I also need to say that it is possible for believers to become stagnant and double minded.

Hebrews 5:12

¹² *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*