

#21 - Romans 4:13-25

Context: Abraham's relationship with God, his righteous status, has not be gained by circumcision, but has been received by faith.

Next: God's promise to Abraham came through the righteousness of faith, it was not earned through the law.

Summary by Douglas Moo, p. 273:

- "Faith apart from works" vv. 3-8
- "Faith apart from circumcision" vv. 9-12
- "Faith apart from law" vv. 13-16
- "Faith apart from sight" vv. 17-21

Romans 4:13-15

- *The promise to Abraham and his offspring...did not come through the law.*
 - The promise: *"that he would be heir of the world"*
 - Three Key Provisions of the Promise as it Unfolds in Genesis (Moo, 274)
 - He would have an immense number of descendants, embracing many nations (Gen. 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4-6, 16-20; 22:17)
 - He would possess "the land" (Gen. 13:15-17; 15:12-21; 17:8)
 - He would be the medium of blessing to "all the peoples of the earth" (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18).
- *...but through the righteousness of faith.*

Conditional Statement:

- *For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs,*
- [Then] *faith is null and the promise is void.*
 - Why? Because the case has been made in Rom. 1-3 that no one keeps the law.
 - John Calvin: "If it is the case that the inheritance is to be based on adherence to the law, then there will be no heirs, because no fallen human being can adequately adhere to the law—and that means that faith is exercised in vain and the promise will never be fulfilled."

Explanatory Clause (concerning the Law):

- *For the law brings wrath,*
- *BUT where there is no law there is no transgression.*
 - There's a distinction between sin (offense against God) and transgression (a breaking of a law code, namely the Mosaic law given to the Jews).

- “For Paul does not use ‘transgression’ as a synonym for ‘sin’....While every ‘transgression’ is a ‘sin,’ not every ‘sin’ is a ‘transgression.’ - Moo, p. 277
- John Calvin: “He who is not instructed by the written law, when he sins, is not guilty of so great a transgression as he is who knowingly breaks and transgresses the law of God.”

Romans 4:16-22

- *That is why it depends on faith*
 - Exegesis note: “That” or “This”? Does “because” point back or forward?
 - “It” = the promise
- *In order that the promise may rest on grace [as opposed to merit]*
- *And be guaranteed to all his offspring*
 - Both Jew - “no only to the adherent of the law”
 - And Gentile - “but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham
 - Again ALL - “who is father of us all.” [Paul often speaks of a “qualified universalism”]
 - OT Word: Gen. 17:5
- *In the presence of the God in whom he believed*
 - Gives life to the dead
 - Calls into existence the things that do not exist
 - Carries the idea of “summoning”
- *In hope he believed against hope*
 - John Chrysostom: “It was against man’s hope, in hope which is of God.”
- *That he should become the father of many nations*
 - OT Word: Gen. 15:5
- *He did not weaken faith when he considered...*
 - *his own body*
 - Good as dead
 - “A hundred years old”
 - *the barrenness of Sarah’s womb*

John Calvin: "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 and corruption: he declares that he counts us just; we are covered with sins: He testifies that he is propitious and kind to us; outward judgments threaten his wrath. 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."

- *No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God*
 - *But he grew strong in his faith and he gave glory to God*
 - *Fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*
 - "Faith is strong precisely because it looks solely to God, and does not depend on human possibilities." (Dunn quoted in Thiselton, p. 120)
 - "Paul stresses that Abraham's faith was directed to the God who had promised, not simply to what he had promised." (Thiselton, p. 121)

Conclusion

- *That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."*

Application: Romans 4:23-25

This "Faith Counted as Righteousness", It's not just for Abraham, but for us as well.

- *It will be counted to us who believe*

To what/who is our faith aimed? What Word do we believe wholeheartedly? What promise do we stake our lives on?

- We believe in him [God]
 - who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord
 - Who was delivered up for our trespasses. (For we are sinners)
 - Who was raised for our justification. (And now we are saints...by grace)

"Faith is about putting one's confidence in the fact that God is faithful to His promises of salvation and is able to keep them. Faith is not a 'work', because it does not earn justification; in fact it is the opposite of works. Works are any activity by which someone might hope to gain God's approval, whereas faith is trusting solely in what He has done. The example of Abraham teaches us that faith does not have to be perfect and unflinching, but it will be the basic conviction that God can be trusted, and actions taken on account of this will show such faith to be genuine." - St. Helen's Church