

**ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH**  
**MAN’S RUIN & CHRIST’S REDEMPTION – Chapters 4-7**

**LESSON 15 – ABRAHAM’S FAITH AND OURS – Romans 4:13-25**

So far in Romans, we’ve learned that salvation is by faith alone...through grace and has nothing to do with human works. Now Paul goes into greater detail about Abraham’s justification by faith to make it even clearer that works have never been a part of God’s redemptive plan.

**The Distinction of Abraham’s Faith**

Verse 13 is essentially a restatement of everything we studied in Romans 4:1-12. God’s promise is separate from works and depends totally on grace through faith.

Galatians 3:17, “This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise.” – NLT

Paul made it clear that justification is...

...not based on heritage  
...not based on conduct

Paul gives three consequences of seeking justification by works...

**Faith Is Replaced**

Romans 4:14, “For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing...”

Paul says that if our inheritance is gained by obedience, then faith has no value. Faith is able to receive anything God promises. If God’s promise is only received through obedience to a set of rules, then faith is cancelled.

**God Is Revoked**

Romans 4:14, “... and the promise is worthless...”

Paul tells us that trying to be God’s heir on the basis of our own actions nullifies His promise.

Galatians 3:18, “For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise...”

What God said to Abraham was not, “Obey this law and I will bless you,” but rather, “I will bless you so believe in my promise.”

**Wrath Is Received**

Romans 4:15, “Because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.”

When people look to the law (works) for justification, they find instead that failure to keep the law makes them guilty.

James 2:10, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”

So why do we have the law if it is not for justification?

Galatians 3:19 and 24-25, “Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

## **The Definition of Abraham’s Faith**

### **The Principle**

Romans 4:16, “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace...”

“Were it not for God’s sovereign grace providing a way of salvation, even a person’s faith could not save him. That is why faith is not simply another form of human works. The power of salvation, or justification, is in God’s grace, not in man’s faith. Abraham’s faith was not in itself righteousness, but was counted to him as righteousness by the One who would Himself graciously provide for all believers the righteousness they could never attain by themselves.”

John MacArthur

Ephesians 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...”

### **The Promise**

Romans 4:16, “...and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring”

When the promise is of faith...it is certain. But if the promise is of the law (works), then it is uncertain.

“The man who walks by the law walks in the night, and his footsteps echo against the wall of the darkness that goes with the law. But the man who walks by the promise of grace walks in the broad day. His footsteps echo against the light of the promises of God.”

Donald Grey Barnhouse

### **The Potential**

Romans 4:16-17, “...not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: I have made you a father of many nations.”

When Paul uses this expression he taps into the tradition that had grown up around the name of Abraham. But Paul went way beyond the traditions of the Jews and saw the prophecy in its worldwide focus.

God’s promise given 3,500 years ago has not expired. It is not the possession of one race of humanity...it is a promise for the entire world.

### **The Person**

Romans 4:17, “He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.”

Faith must always be centered in a person...not in a thing, and Christian faith always rests upon the person of Christ. Abraham believed in the God of resurrection and at that point in history there had been no recorded resurrection from the dead. Still Abraham believed that God could give life to the dead.

Hebrews 11:17 and 19, “By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son... Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Abraham also believed in the God of creation. He believed in a God who could create something from nothing.

Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

### **The Description of Abraham’s Faith**

Abraham had hope when there was no human reason to have hope. Abraham believed God when he said this...

Genesis 15:5, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.”

Against all hope, Abraham believed and Genesis 15:6 goes on to tell us, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

Romans 4:19, “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.”

For twenty-five years Abraham believed God without any specific evidence of the promise. He did not become weak in his faith when time passed between the promise and the expected fulfillment of that promise.

Romans 4:20, “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith...”

Abraham did not waver in his faith. In other words, he didn’t go back and forth between believing God and not believing God. His faith stayed firm. Even though he gave in to Sarah’s pressure to have a child with Hagar, he eventually realized that no human effort could fulfill the promise of God.

Abraham is a great encouragement to those of us who believe but often don’t understand.

Romans 4:21, “Being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.”

The faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of Abraham come together in this verse. Looking back over Paul’s description of Abraham’s faith, these phrases should grab our attention...

- “Without weakening in his faith” 4:19
- “He did not waver regarding the promise” 4:20
- “Was strengthened in his faith” 4:20
- “Being fully persuaded” 4:21
- “God had power to do” 4:21

Abraham had no hesitation and no reservation in his faith. God’s ability was the foundation of his faith.

## **The Deduction of Abraham's Faith**

Romans 4:23-25, "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

"In these verses the whole of Christianity is understood."

Martin Luther

Paul finishes this chapter on Abraham's faith with an application to all of us. He wants us to see how this Old Testament story impacts our lives. His conclusion is that we are justified by faith exactly as Abraham was.

Paul later reminds the Romans that, "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."

– Romans 15:4

"When Jesus died, he died as my representative, and I died in Him; when he arose, he arose as my representative, and I arose in him. There no longer remains any sin on me."

R. A. Torrey