

RIGHT THIS WAY

"STANDING ON THE PROMISES"

ROMANS 4:13-25

Today, with social media tools such as tweets, chats, grams, blogs, vlogs, posts, boards, links and more, anyone can instantly become a pundit. Bang out 280 characters and you can potentially crash a market, unmask a criminal or start a war. A pundit used to be someone who was considered an expert who provided measured insight about complex matters. Now it seems everyone shouts through social media rapidly with an inflated sense of authority and glaring absence of proof. The art of persuasion is being lost to the hyperkinetic hashtag.

To make claims without strong supporting reason, evidence or logic is to lose the opportunity to gain a second hearing. A barking dog will be ignored if his barking identifies no sufficient stimulus. Two of the most persuasive forms of supporting an argument, used by speakers and writers for ages, are analogy and precedent. If something is true, then it is most likely true in other arenas (analogy) or has been found true in concrete examples from past similar cases (precedent).

Paul, as a masterful persuader, supports his claims regarding the way of salvation (Romans 3:21-31) with a prime example of faith precedent, Abraham, the father of many nations (Romans 4:1-25). A supporting case for Paul's bold claim of

When man justifies the wicked, it is a miscarriage of justice, which God hates, but when God justifies the ungodly, it is a miracle of grace for us to adore.

– J. I. Packer

justification by faith without works (Romans 3:28) is that Abraham, the great father of the Jewish people, is declared righteous (Gen 15:6; Ro 4:3,22) by God without practicing circumcision (Romans 4:9-12) or by law-keeping (Ro 4:13-22). Paul claims that if Abraham is justified without the law (precedent), then we are justified in the same manner (Ro 4:23-25). Good argument often requires more room for development than a tweet affords.

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Students of the Bible often assume that followers of the one true God as described in the Old Testament came to salvation in a manner different from believers in the New Testament. The perception is that since the Old Testament introduces the Mosaic Law and details a people's history of attempts at keeping this law, then Old Testament believers must have been "saved" by keeping the law. The line of reasoning concludes that since Old Testament believers so frequently failed at law-keeping, Jesus came to introduce a "new covenant" or "new testament" that offers salvation by grace. In summary, this view holds that Old Testament believers were saved by works and New Testament believers are saved, not by works but by grace. This view is a gross misunderstanding of the Bible's description of salvation.

All people, both from the Old Testament and the New Testament, come into a right relationship with God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Old

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Testament believers trusted in God and his promises of a coming Savior. New Testament believers trust in God's provision of a Savior who has already appeared, Jesus Christ. "Abraham [an OT believer] places his entire trust in the prophetic word that promises, as it were, the birth of an heir from the dead (Rom. 4:17-21; Heb. 11:11-12). God reckons his faith in this seed, pregnant with its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, equivalent to meeting his moral demands. In this, Abraham models our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's sacrifice for sin and God's crediting that faith to us as righteousness (Romans 4:22-25)" (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 334).

Salvation, even in the Old Testament, is obtained by faith alone in God's promise of provision of a Savior who is our sacrifice for sin and who gives us life through the power of God's resurrection.

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 4:13-25

13 It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, 15 because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-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. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." 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.

18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 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. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle the various forms of the word "promise" in vv. 13-25.
- * Draw a box around each instance of the word "law" in vv. 13-15.
- * Underline the negative words related to the law found in vv. 14-15.
- * Double underline the phrases showing the purposes the promise coming by faith in Romans 4:16.
- * Beside v. 17 write the Old Testament chapter and verse reference that is quoted.
- * Draw lines connecting "dead" in v. 17 to similar words in v. 19.
- * Draw a line from the phrase "things that were not" in v. 17 to a phrase indicating something similar in v. 18.
- * Number the things Abraham did according to vv. 19-21.
- * Double circle the repeated words found in vv. 22-24.
- * Draw lines from the word "believe" in v. 24 to what we are to believe in vv. 24-25.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What were the results of Abraham's faith according to verse 13?
2. What are the outcomes of dependence on the law according to verses 14-15?
3. How can Paul legitimately claim that Abraham is the "father of us all"?
4. In Abraham's life as described in verses 18-21, to what do the phrases "life to the dead" and "things that were not" in verse 17 allude?
5. What does *hope* contribute to the practice of faith?
6. Why was Abraham credited with righteousness according to verses 20-22?
7. What must we believe for righteousness to be credited to us (vv. 23-25)?
8. What is the *purpose* of Jesus being delivered over (v. 25)?
9. How does the resurrection make us right or justified before God?
10. How is faith in Jesus similar to Abraham's faith in God's promise to him?

day **3** **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In Romans chapter 4, Paul continues his treatise on the Gospel which reveals God's righteousness as coming from faith (Ro 1:17). Paul draws a number of conclusions in Romans 3 about sinfulness, justification, law and faith. To illustrate and support a number of these conclusions, Paul highlights the Old Testament "Poster Boy" or chief example of God's favor-Abraham. "The primary and most obvious rhetorical convention used by Paul in 4:1-24 is paradigm-the highlighting of an important person or the recounting of a significant story as an exemplum or model to be either imitated or avoided. It is a rhetorical convention widely used by speakers and writers of the Greco-Roman world, as well as by ancient Jewish teachers and authors" (Richard Longnecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NIGTC, 476).

In the second half of Romans 4, as Paul discusses the example of Abraham, he changes the subject from circumcision to the law and its inability to bring righteousness to followers of God. Instead, righteousness and God's promises come by faith and not by works. God's promises to Abraham stand in contrast to the law. Abraham could do nothing to merit or earn God's promises. Because Abraham is described as being "credited" with righteousness, he is described as such before receiving any formal law from God. If we are justified by keeping the law, then how was our great patriarch justified and made righteous if he had not received the law from God? In Genesis 15, Abraham is described as believing God and it being credited to him as righteousness. This was an occasion that clearly happened before God instructed Abraham in the practice of circumcision or any other lawful observances. Even if circumcision is a precursor to the law, Abraham is declared righteous by God through faith even before he obeys any specific commands of God.

The law was given only to establish the fact of our failure as lawbreakers. When the law is given, then "transgressions" come to light (v. 15). "Transgression" is a term of legal precision. We sin in a general sense even if we do not know the law. Most people have a sense of right and wrong, even if they do not have a formal legal system. But when the law is established, the "small print" details of

the law condemn us often and with greater specificity and severity. The law does not deliver to us a system whereby we merit "obedience points." Rather, the law only clarifies our demerits and offenses. Our failure to successfully keep the law can only lead us to punishment (wrath). The law cannot reward us with achievement badges of righteousness.

Even if good works or law-keeping could produce a level of righteousness, God's promise to Abraham of becoming a great nation could come about only through faith. Abraham was working from a large deficit. No amount of law-keeping could produce offspring in fulfillment of God's promise. Abraham's case was hopeless, with himself being old and his wife being barren. Abraham considered himself and his wife "dead" and unable to produce any life. The "father of many nations" (v. 17) had nothing that he could do or work to achieve God's promise of blessing. Abraham was in an impossible situation. In his hopelessness, Abraham expressed hope in God. Abraham believed that only God had the power to bring life from things dead and something great from a great accumulation of nothing.

The phrase "credited to him as righteousness" is a theologically loaded phrase. We notice that the action for Abraham is passive. God is doing the "crediting" and Abraham is the beneficiary without effort on his behalf. "Credit" has been translated "reckoned," "counted," "imputed," "accepted," and even "regarded." The term is an accounting term and is used to mark business ledgers and assessments. A record is considered and considered or accounted or credited as positive or negative. We are assessed and counted as obtaining righteousness by God because of faith. Where our failures at law-keeping show us with a great debt of sinfulness, faith in God is accounted by God as a credit of righteousness. Jesus delivered up for our sins pays for our insurmountable debt of sin. Our trust in God raising Jesus from the dead credits us with Christ's own righteousness (2Co 5:21).

This "righteousness" is not for Abraham alone, but is for us all. If Abraham is the "father of us all" (v. 16), then his faith and its ensuing designation of righteousness can be our experience as well.

Our sin makes us like Abraham, "dead" and without hope of spiritual life or righteousness (Ro 6:23; Eph 2:1). As Abraham had faith in God's power to bring life out of death and nothingness, we can, like Abraham, have God's righteousness granted to us if we believe and trust that God in his ultimate power raised Jesus from the dead after he died for our sins (vv. 24-25).

Paul's statement in Romans 4:25 is thought to be a creedal or worship statement of the early church. The parallelism of the phrase and the succinct style of the statement support the claim that Paul is not originating a new idea here but

restating something the early church already believed and celebrated. Paul was repeating what the early church was already proclaiming. Jesus' death and resurrection are the source of forgiveness for sin and justification. Law-keeping does not bring righteousness or justification. Father Abraham is proof positive of this claim. If the progenitor of the people of God was declared righteous by faith, we can do no better on our own. We can obtain righteousness before God in no other fashion than faith in God's provision of a Savior.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Law-keeping or morality does not make us righteous before God. Faith in Jesus' death for our sins and faith in Jesus' resurrection makes us right with God. Abraham is a prime example of justification by faith alone in God's promises and not by good works or human efforts.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

How does the understanding of justification by faith and not by works make you feel toward God?

How would you explain righteousness by faith to a good, moral friend who is not a follower of Jesus?

What is "dead" or impossible in your life for which you need to trust in God for his power and provision?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 13 **Law** Greek word is "nomos." "The context requires that nomos mean the Mosaic Law, The Torah (see 2:12). In Galatians 3, Paul makes his case for the exclusion of the law from God's dealings with Abraham on the basis of simple chronology - the law, given 430 years after the promise, cannot annul or substantially alter the previous agreement between God and Abraham (Galatians 3:15-17) . . . [Not by law] denies then, that what had been promised to Abraham was attained by him or by his descendants through the law, e.g. by their doing of the law" (Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, WEC, 279).

v. 13 **promise** God's promise has multiple expressions in the life of the believer. Promises full of expectation stand in strong contrast to condemning laws. "The repeated theme of 'promise' here (4:13-14, 16; 4:20-21) might recall for Paul's audience the importance of trusting the promised Messiah (1:2-4). The promise of the 'seed' (descendants; 4:18) may point to a key element in Paul's analogy. Most important in Paul's analogy is Abraham's faith in God's message to him, but that message foreshadowed the gospel in key ways. Just as the promise of inheriting 'the world' (4:13) foreshadowed the kingdom (i.e., the expected reign of the Messiah), so the promised seed may have foreshadowed a more particular seed (cf. Gal. 3:16)" (Craig Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, 68).

v. 15 **wrath** "Now we come to the true function of law. It brings wrath. Hodges sees this as working out in two ways: (a) our imperfect obedience brings the law's curse on us, and (b) law 'excites and exasperates the evil passions of the heart.' The law has its place in the way God brings people salvation, but that place is not the provision of a means where by people may so prove themselves virtuous that they may receive salvation as a merited reward. Rather, law shows up our inadequacies and makes us see our need of a Savior" (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 206).

v. 15 **transgression** "Thus [transgression] is used technically to describe the violation of command-ments that are specified and written. Romans 2:12-16 indicates that God's wrath is also inflicted on those who do not have a written law (cf. 5:13-14). We should not conclude from 4:15 that wrath is experienced only when a written command-ment is violated. Nevertheless, transgression of the law involves greater responsibility since the infraction is conscious and therefore involves rebellion against a known standard" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 230-231).

v. 16 **grace** "Contrary to the seeming stability that law (particularly the Mosaic law) provides— as well as in opposition to the self-righteousness that one's keeping of law (particularly the Mosaic law) often engenders—Paul implies that it is only when one is based on the triumvirate of 'promise,' 'faith,' and 'grace,' whatever the situation, that "righteousness" as a gift of God can be received and that a person can live acceptably before God" (Longnecker, 519).

v. 17 **Father** The word is used seven times in Romans chapter 4. Paul seems to be connecting the promises made to Abraham with this word which is his namesake (Abraham means "father of many nations"). "Paul begins this verse by recalling the account of God's reiterated promise to Abraham in Gen. 17:5-6 and quoting from that promise the statement 'I have made you a father of many nations.' By the way in which he will later in the second part of 4:18 (i.e., almost immediately after 4:17) associate Abraham's hope for progeny with the final words of Gen. 15:5, 'so shall your descendants be,' it may be assumed that the apostle, as well as his Christian addressees at Rome, understood 'the promise' he had been speaking about (at least since 4:13) as the promise given by God in Gen. 15:5 - which promise 'Abraham believed,' as stated in Gen. 15:6, and which belief "was credited to him as righteousness" (Longnecker, 516).

v. 18 **hope** "A decidedly Pauline word, and a word found more often in Romans than in any other New Testament book. The concept is often linked with faith (5:2;15:13;Gal. 5:5; Eph.1:18-19; Col. 1:23; 1Tim. 4:10; Heb. 11:1; 1 Pet. 1:21), and not infrequently with love as well (5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:,13; Gal. 5:5-6; Col. 1:4-15; 1 Thess. 1:3;5:8; Heb. 6:10-12;10:22-24; 1 Pet 1:21-22). It is distinguished from secular optimism in that it is grounded in what God has done in Christ. In the light of Calvary believers may have confidence that God's purpose will be worked out to the end" (Morris, 210).

v. 22 **credited** "The reckoning of Abraham's faith as righteous means 'to account to him a righteousness that does not inherently belong to him.' Abraham's response to God's promise leads God to reckon to him a status of righteousness" (Moo, 265-266).

v. 25 **justification** His resurrection authenticates and confirms that our justification has been secured. The resurrection of Christ constitutes evidence that his work on our behalf has been completed.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There have been moments in my parenting journey when I didn't feel equipped for the task of motherhood. While there are many times of joy, at other times, it's hard. Once, after a particular son had been dismissed from his preschool Bible class because he wouldn't obey, I cried out to God for help. He reminded me that He had a plan for this wayward little waist-high boy. I just needed to trust that promise. So, I clung to it and repeated it to myself through the junior high years and sure enough, in young adulthood, I see the mighty hand of God moving in this bearded boy's life. Thankfully, the promise was not 75 years in the making like it was for Abraham. Though childless, God changed his name to the "Father of Many." Abraham believed it and embraced it. He knew God to be the One who "calls things that are not as though they are" and was "fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." This faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness. God will credit righteousness to us by faith as well. His grace by faith not only saves us but carries us through life with its ups and downs. What promise do you need to hold onto today? He is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine because of His power at work in us (Ephesians 3:20).

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 4:13-25

1. How did Abraham receive the promise of God?
2. Why did Abraham continue to believe? (v. 21)
3. For whom does God credit righteousness? (v. 24)

What Do You Think

Abraham believed in God's promises. What about you? Is there a promise of God that you find hard to believe? Talk to your parents about it.

What R U Going To Do

Look up write down all of the promises of God you can find in the Bible. Ask your parents for help. Bring them to church for an extra 3 tokens!

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

Memory Verse

Romans 4:25 - *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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