

Abraham's Faith and Ours

Romans 4:13 - 25

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

In today's lesson, Paul continued to use Abraham and his faith as examples for us to emulate and follow. God worked through Abraham to build the nation of Israel and to usher in His Son, Jesus, to bring salvation to the world. In today's lesson, Paul made clear that works are inadequate for salvation when compared to God's plan and prescription for salvation.

Verse 13 functions as a summary or a restatement of verses 1-12. Paul discounted the role of the law and the human capacity for keeping the law. While at the same time, Paul emphasized faith. The law can bring only wrath because it leads to a sense of self-satisfaction and self-justification.

In verse 16, Paul underscored the activity of God's grace. God's sovereign grace is the foundation for our salvation. Faith is the means or vehicle by which we receive that grace into our lives. Grace is God's work and God's guarantee. John MacArthur has written that "*the power of salvation, or justification, is in God's grace, not in man's faith.*"

In verse 17, Paul says that God brings life to the dead and brings into being that which was once considered hopeless or impossible. This verse offers a brief glimpse of how God acts in salvation. We are raised from our death in sin to new life in Christ. The unacceptable nature of man that was hopelessly separated from God is changed and redeemed in the act of salvation.

David Jeremiah concluded that the faith on Abraham was marked by at least six crucial characteristics...

1. His faith conquered impossibility
2. His faith conquered improbability
3. His faith conquered inadequacy
4. His faith conquered inconsistency
5. His faith conquered insecurity
6. His faith conquered infidelity

God's ability became the foundation for the stability of Abraham's faith. Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by his willingness to leave behind everything in his ancestral land and to go to a land that was un-named, unknown and utterly unfamiliar to Him. All that Abraham had was God and His faith in God. And that was sufficient. For salvation, all we have is God's promise to save us if we call on Him. We leave behind all that is familiar, known and comfortable...but utterly dragging us away from the Lord.

We have to remember that Paul used Abraham as an example. God's work with and in Abraham is illustrative of God's work among us. Verse 25 reminds us of the finished work of Christ. The Lord died for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. The cross is the dumping ground or burial ground for our sins. God does not overlook them or sweep them under the proverbial rug. Those sins were placed upon Christ who was placed upon the cross.

Applications ...

1. Read all of Romans 4 in one sitting. Take in carefully what is said about justification and faith.
2. Memorize Romans 4:25. Highlight this passage in your Bible as a brief statement of the finished work of Christ.
3. Write down your personal understanding of grace and faith. Someone has said that GRACE is an acronym meaning "God's riches at Christ's expense." And that FAITH is an acronym meaning "Forsaking all, I trust Him." How do you understand grace and faith?
4. Define your understanding of justification in a single sentence. How would you explain it to someone else?
5. Spend time today recommitting or rededicating yourself to the Lord. Ask God to refresh or renew the joy of your salvation.