



Romans

Right With God

Father Abraham's Faith

Lesson Twenty-Two

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Father Abraham's Faith

Chapter three ends with Paul's statement that faith doesn't rule out the law, the religion of the Jews, it confirms it. He then hears the silent questioner ask, "How is this so? You are teaching a new doctrine. You want us to believe something that is completely unheard of!" Paul responds, "not so." This doctrine is as old as the Jews. Paul goes back to Abraham, "father" of the nation of Israel. To truly gain the attention of the Jews, Paul had to reach back to the ultimate boasting point. If you were a descendent of Abraham, you were definitely one of God's chosen. How is it that Abraham was chosen, out of all God's options, to be the founder of a whole race of people...actually, God's people? (Read Romans 4:1-8)

Abraham's faith, says Paul, that's the answer.* Paul has been talking about faith, and now he says that if you really want to see faith, look at Abraham. Abraham followed God away from home, friends, financial security, and all else that was familiar to him. God told him that if Abraham was willing to follow, God would provide for him and he would become the first in a long line of God's chosen people. But, Abraham would have to accept the terms just mentioned.

He says that Abraham might boast, but not before God. The word "but" here is very emphatic. This is an exclamation declaring the total impossibility. Abraham has absolutely nothing to boast about before God. Then he quotes Genesis 15:6 which says, "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." This is where God promised Abram that his children would be as great in number as the stars in the sky. Abraham, who was old and childless, had very good reason to laugh at God. However, Scripture says that Abraham believed...had faith...in God. He had faith that God would live up to His promise.

God sees our faith, and then He places His righteousness into our account. We are judged then not by our faith, but by His righteousness which comes to us because we believe that God is who He is, and He will do what He promised.

In verse four, he says that the difference between works and faith can be better understood by comparing a day's pay and a free gift. He says that if you work all day, you get paid, and the pay is not a gift. The employer must pay the employee for the work that she or he did. What the employee gets is not a gift, not a favor, not grace.

Paul uses a different word for "work" in verse five than that in verse four. In four, Paul is talking about manual labor, or physical work. In verse five, he refers to things we do to please God. This is religious work. It might be attending church and giving money, the tithe, to the church. It might be helping the poor or physically hurting. We could see it as visiting

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the sick or even witnessing to the lost. The idea in verse five is that work, such as this, is not what makes us right with God. These things please God, but they don't earn us salvation.

Paul says that our faith is counted, accounted, credited, as righteousness. This has nothing to do with doing good religious work. Faith is not work...work of any kind. Faith is letting go. It is relaxing in the knowledge of who God is and what God has done in Jesus Christ. Salvation is, in fact, the absence of any dependence on work.

As if Paul didn't have enough power when calling out Abraham, he brings on King David, the greatest hero of the Jews. (Verses six through eight) This is a quotation from Psalm 32: 1, 2a. He says that David believed that God credited righteousness to persons without regard for works. He uses the word lawlessness which is, literally, the refusal to live by God's law. He says that the lawlessness, the sin, has been put away. Our sins are no longer visible to God.

**Scripture Memory: "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."
Romans 4:8**

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

For the Teacher:

Lesson Goal: To further inform students what faith really means, through Abraham's example.

1. Paul calls Abraham their forefather. Just so you know, this is the only place in the New Testament where this word, forefather, is used. To truly gain the attention of a Jew, Paul had to reach back to the ultimate boasting point. If you were a descendent of Abraham, you were definitely one of God's chosen .
2. For more on Abraham's choice to follow God, see Hebrews 11:8-10.
3. Faith is not equal to righteousness. Our faith is not seen by God as righteousness, our faith is simply the way God "reckons," or accounts, righteousness to us. Faith is not an easier option than good works. It is not that since we could never be good enough, God decided that maybe we could just substitute faith. Not so. God gives salvation freely. Faith is the means by which we receive His gift. He is going to say a little later, (Romans 10:10) "With the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness..." Righteousness is the result of faith, it is not the equivalent of faith.
4. The Law required the worshipper to keep all kinds of rules, to do all kinds of good deeds, to participate in all kinds of worship functions. The system of sacrificial offerings was complicated and expensive. The goal was to produce righteousness. It did not work. The justification Paul is talking about here requires no work at all. The worshipper cannot earn anything. This justification expects the believer to relax, fall in faith into the waiting arms of God. This justification expects the believer to open up to the free gift of God's amazing grace.
5. Bible commentator William Barclay said, "It is the supreme discovery of the Christian life that we do not need to torture ourselves with a losing battle to earn God's love but rather need to accept in perfect trust, the love which God offers to us. True, after that, any man of honor is under the life-long obligation to show himself worthy of that love. But he is no longer a criminal seeking to obey an impossible law; he is a lover offering his all to one who loved him when he did not deserve it."

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Student Worksheet

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=How is it that Abraham was chosen, out of all God's options, to be the _____ of a whole race of people...actually, God's people? Abraham's _____, says Paul, that's the answer.

=Scripture says that Abraham believed...had _____...in God. He had faith that God would live up to His _____.

=We are judged not by our _____ but by His _____ which comes to us because we _____ that God is who He is, and He will do what He _____.

=Religious work might be attending church, _____ the tithe to the church, _____ the poor or physically hurting, or _____ the sick...even witnessing to the _____.

=Faith is letting _____. It is relaxing in the knowledge of who _____ is and what God has done in _____ Christ.

=David believed that _____ credited righteousness to persons without regard for _____.

Scripture Memory: "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

Romans 4:8

A Roman Road to Salvation:

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Everyone is a sinner and needs salvation.

Romans 6:23a "For the wages of sin is death." The law of God is unchangeable. If someone sins the penalty must be paid, the payment is death.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us." God loves us so much, according to John 3:16, that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

Romans 6:23b "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The penalty for sin is spiritual death, but God, through the death of Jesus on the cross, took the penalty for the sins of all people, and now everyone can have eternal life. See also, II Corinthians 5:21

Romans 10:9, 10 "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." To personally receive the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, you trust God to be what He says He is. Believing that "God raised Him (Jesus) from the dead" is to accept all that the Bible says about God and His Son, Jesus. Then you speak (confess) the words, "Jesus is Lord," as a statement of faith. Believing "with your heart" means that you believe with your mind and with everything that you are.

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You have the promise of God Himself that if you do what Romans 10:9, 10 says, you will become God's child and have eternal life.

Romans 12:1, 2 "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Becoming a Christian is a life-long act of faith and worship.