



Romans

Right With God

Father Abraham's Hope

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In these verses, Paul makes it clear that the sign of Judaism, circumcision, was not what made Abraham right with God. He argues in verses nine through twelve that since Abraham was given the promise from God before he had the sign of Judaism, God's promise was not dependent on that sign. And, according to Romans 4:12, those who have never been circumcised...have never been Jews...are just like Abraham when he trusted, had faith in, God even before he was circumcised. (Read Romans 4:9-12)

So, Abraham is the spiritual father to not only the Jews, but to everyone who trusts...has faith in...God. Abraham was the man who took God at His word. Sons and daughters of Abraham are the children of faith. And, you can say the opposite. People who do not come to God in faith cannot be the children of Abraham...not following in the footsteps of Abraham...no matter what kind of religious activities they engage in or claim.* After this paragraph, no one could claim right relationship with God simply because they carried the DNA of Abraham. And, Paul makes it clear that there is nothing we can be or do that makes us right with God, except faith; which, by the way, God provides.

In the next five verses, Paul lists two sides, the only two sides, of being in right relationship with God. (Read Romans 4:13-17) On one hand there is the law. It let's us know what is wrong. It is like the X-ray machine that can show you a broken bone, but can't fix the bone. It's very presence means that there will be sin. When you make a law, someone is going to break it. A little later, Paul is going to tell us that if we tell folks that they can't do something it just encourages them to do it. However, we will wait till chapter seven for that. Also, Paul points out that the breaking of the law, which every human will do, means that all of us face God's wrath. Remember, we said that God's wrath is against sin, not the sinner.

The other side of the relationship with God is God's promise. God told Abraham that he was going to be the father of a great nation. Abraham believed God. God's promise was not because of anything Abraham did, it was a sovereign...independent...choice of God to bless him. Another element in the right side of relationship with God is His grace. According to verse sixteen, God was graciously waiting for Abraham's faith. When Abraham gave himself in faith to God's plan, then grace...the free gift...was applied to him. Grace is always undeserved. You can't do anything to make it happen. No one can earn God's love. The key element in all this is faith. It is, as we have already said, totally believing that God is who He said He is and will do all that He said He would do. All this is from the God who "gives life to the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were." A better translation of that

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last phrase is “calls into being that which does not exist.” Abraham, and we, believe in a God who can tell emptiness...nothing...to become something, and it does.

Now Paul explains that last statement. (Read Romans 4:18-25) God told Abraham that he was going to make a great nation out of him. Abraham was already an old man and had no children. Abraham understood the “does not exist” part. How could he become father of a great nation when he and Sarah were too old to have children. But, did that stop Abraham? Absolutely not! Abraham had faith that God could do whatever God wanted to do. He had hope...hope that he could be exactly what God wanted him to be. The writer of Hebrews wrote it down: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.” (Hebrews 11:1) NAB Abraham hoped for a family. If God was with him, he had the assurance that his hope would be fulfilled. It is when we begin to trust in our ability, and subsequently see our inability, that we lose hope. And, ultimately, Paul says, our true hope is in Jesus who justifies us.

Scripture Memory: “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said unto him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’” Romans 4:18

*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 encourage students to see the relationship between hope and faith.

1. This is a long text. Your lesson writer has tried to break it down to “bite” sized pieces. It is suggested that you read it from more than one translation, several times, before you try to teach it. A hint: dwelling too long on circumcision will not help the teacher convey the heart of the lesson. This lesson is all about why Abraham had reason to hope.
2. It is good to know that when Paul talked about God’s promise, in verse thirteen, that he used the Greek word “epaggelia.” (ep-ah-gel’-e-ah) It is not a promise that depends on conditions. Not: “If you will do this...I will do that.” No, it is a promise made out of the goodness of someone’s heart, made without conditions and with true grace.
3. The promise to Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12:1, 2. “The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.’” There is absolutely nothing in that promise that can be misunderstood as requiring anything from Abraham other than faith. However, there is everything that would raise Abraham’s hope for the future.
4. Read Genesis 17:15-17. God promised Abraham this “impossible” child when he was one hundred years old and Sarah, his wife, was ninety. Scripture says that Abraham laughed. Your lesson writer doesn't believe for a minute that Abraham was laughing at God...as some have suggested. He was laughing at the circumstances. Who wouldn’t see the humor in a ninety year old woman carrying a baby...or for that matter, a one-hundred year old father changing diapers and singing “Rock-a-bye Baby,” or its Hebrew equivalent?
5. Verse sixteen refers to grace “guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring.” Paul calls on a saying that the Jewish Rabbis had, “What is written of Abraham is written also of his children.” They were saying that any promise made to Abraham is good to his children also. We believe that those who follow Abraham’s faith will also receive God’s promise.

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Student Worksheet

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=Abraham is the spiritual father to not only the Jews, but to _____ who has _____ in God. Abraham took God at His _____. Sons and daughters of Abraham are the _____ of faith. People who do not come to God in faith cannot be the _____ of Abraham no matter what kind of _____ activities they engage in or claim.

=Abraham, and we, believe in a God who can tell _____...nothing...to become something, and it _____.

=Abraham had faith that God could do _____ God wanted to do. He had _____ that he could be exactly what God wanted him to be.

=It is when we begin to trust in our _____, and subsequently see our inability, that we lose _____. And, ultimately, Paul says, our _____ is in Jesus who justifies us.

Scripture Memory: "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many6 nations, just as it had been said unto him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" Romans 4:18

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.