

Romans

Bible Study

All Saved by Faith

Romans 4:16—22

Paul continues to prove that salvation is always by faith, not of works, and that this applies to all believers in any dispensation. His proof goes back to Abraham, who was declared righteous by God for simply believing. He was saved by faith. It was after God declared him righteous that God gave him the sign of circumcision, and the Mosaic Law was given hundreds of years later. In other words, circumcision and obeying the Law have nothing to do with salvation.

This concept was not understood by the religious leaders of Israel. They followed the Law in order to gain eternal life. Instead of building their works on top of their faith, they built their faith on top of their works. Salvation is always by faith and never by works.

Saved through faith by grace (verse 16)

The first part of this chapter is spent showing how it was of faith, not works, as to why God justified Abraham, and Paul makes the case that we are justified in the same manner. Verse 16 begins with the word *therefore* because it is summing up Paul's argument for salvation by faith. If we were not saved only by faith, it would not be by God's grace because, contrary to what many teach, grace can never be earned. Grace is always freely given, with no strings attached (Romans 11:6). According to Ephesians 1:7, we were forgiven according to the riches of His grace. This speaks of God's abundance. But it doesn't stop there, for Paul expands upon God's abundance by telling us of the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us (Ephesians 2:7). How amazing that God freely slathered His grace upon us, then heaped even more grace upon us, all in demonstration of His great love and mercy toward us. The tremendous amount of grace that God poured on us demonstrates how low we are and how magnificent He is.

There are many today who take verses that intentionally point to God and twist them around to point them toward themselves. It is in man's nature to be self-serving, self-centered and self-important, and so it is not a huge stretch to see why people would want to interpret Scripture to revolve around themselves. They reason that they are so absolutely special in God's eyes that He sent His Son to die for them. They read Ephesians 2:10 and marvel at what an incredible work of art they must be, when in actuality the verse is about God's greatness, not theirs. They think of themselves as special because God's spirit dwells in them, forgetting that it was God who made it possible for us to be able to house His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). They somehow always twist the magnanimousness of God to indicate the worthiness of themselves, even claiming that it was God who believes in them. Some even go so far as to think God needs us in order to be fulfilled (Acts 17:24—26). They are, in effect, saying that God exists to meet human needs, instead of man existing to serve Him. God's grace is magnified when we realize our true condition as an unrighteous, wicked, evil, godless sinner. Only when I consider my natural self dead is when God considers me most useful (Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:3).

The promise spoken of in verse 16 is that of eternal life. The promise was fulfilled because Abraham believed and was justified. We have this same promise related to salvation.

Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The specific promises given to Abraham involved land, many descendants and wealth. He will receive these because of his faith in God (Hebrews 11:10). We too have promises given to us based on our faith in God. We are looking for our heavenly reward and abode. All who come to God in

faith are promised eternal life, however, the specific details of these promises differ according to how God is dealing within each dispensation.

The father of many (verses 16—18)

Abraham is not only the father of many nations, he is also the father of all believers. Physically, he was the father of Israel through his sons Issac and Jacob, and also the father of many of the Arab nations today through Ishmael. Spiritually, he is the father of all who are saved by faith. This does not mean that we are now spiritual Israel. This is actually a heretical doctrine that makes the Church Israel and denies Israel of the promises given to her by God. This doctrine makes God a liar. Abraham only connects Israel and the Church as an example of faith, not of promises.

According to Genesis 15:6, Abram believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness. Abram was declared righteous by God because he had faith in God, apart from works. This promise is given to all people in all times. The only requirement to be declared righteous is to have faith in what God says. Those who have faith will obey God, but it is the faith that saves, not the works. Abraham was a pattern of faith both for those who were circumcised and for those who were not circumcised. Paul, however, is our pattern for what God expects of us in this Dispensation of Grace (Colossians 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:16).

God is able to give life to His promises. When He told Abram and Sarai that He would give them a son, He gave life to their dead, unproductive bodies so that they could bear children (Hebrews 11:12). When He promised Israel a great amount of land, He will cause it to happen. When He promised that we will be caught up to meet Him in the air, we can trust that He will give life to His words. Those who unbiblically change Israel's physical promises into the Church's spiritual promises are denying God's power and sovereignty in being able to bring about what He said He would do (Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 14:24; 46:9—10). If God says it, it will be done. This is why we can trust prophesy and treat it as if it has already happened. This is why God sees us as already seated in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

Did not waiver (verses 19—22)

There are many who claim that Abram's faith had wavered as evidenced by him having a child through Sarai's handmaid, Hagar. They reason that if Abram truly had faith that he would have waited for God to supply them a child. This thinking, however, contradicts Scripture. Romans 4:19—20 clearly states that he never stumbled in unbelief, but rather grew strong in the faith. He had always understood that God would give them a child.

While Abram's faith remained strong, his desire to speed things along got in the way. Instead of allowing God to do what He promised in His own timing, Abram decided to run ahead of God and take matters into his own hands. His faith remained, knowing that God would supply them a child, but the means God would use to provide that child was hidden from Abram.

It seems that we are often like Abram, in a hurry for God to work and too willing to do things in our own power. In this dispensation of Grace, God does not speak to us like He did to Abram. Instead, He "speaks" through Scripture and the indwelling Holy Spirit. God does not give us extra-biblical information, in spite of those who claim God speaks to them. God's instructions to us are contained in Paul's 13 books. By following Paul's instructions given to the believer, we will be in His perfect will.

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