

May 19, 2024

“Counted as Righteous”
Lesson 2

Romans 4:13-25

Intro

Having an example, a model, of what something looks like makes it easier for us to follow that example. We can see what the end result should look like. In Romans 4, Paul presents Abraham as a model or example of what New Testament Christians should be like. Paul makes the point that Abraham had a relationship with God because he placed his faith in God and trusted God’s promises. That was it—nothing else was needed. Jesus models that same thing when He trusts God by submitting his will to the Father’s in allowing Himself to be sacrificed on the cross. Our passage today looks at Abraham and what it means to be a true heir of Abraham.

Read Romans 4:13-25

1. vs. 13: Paul is not against the Law of Moses, but he says that the Law doesn’t equal to the promise Abraham received God’s promise roughly 500 years before Moses was born
This logically makes the promise the foundation of the Law, not the other way around
Abraham’s being the heir of the world is a spiritual concept
His example, followed by the disciples of Jesus, allowed them to inherit the world
They gained the world, those who would listen, believe, and obey

Paul says people receive the promise through “righteousness that comes by faith”
God is the God of all who have a relationship with Him
This relationship must be based on faith in Him, not works of the person
(See May 5 lesson on this topic of works vs. faith)
God credits us with righteousness when we come to Him in faith
Because we are connected to Him, we also will “inherit” the world
2. vs. 14: Paul addresses the idea of works vs. faith again here
Either following the law or living in faith save a person; it can’t be both
The first depends upon self for salvation, but the second depends on God
One can obey the law and still trust God for their salvation—
The early Jewish converts did exactly this
The Law of Moses leads one to love God and one’s fellow human beings
But what is promised by faith requires faith
Law-keeping cannot substitute for trusting God
3. vs. 15: If there isn’t a law against something, then doing that thing cannot create a transgression
The law does define what actions are sinful, and what effects sin has
However, the law does not save
It brings wrath, God’s righteous anger against those sinful actions
God’s wrath is both justified and necessary to bring about justice
The law’s function of making sin known to us serves a spiritual purpose

4. vs. 16: This verse notes two things that are very important

First, God's saving work comes by *faith* to all who will receive it

The Law was provided to show people their imperfection

It also was intended to build a community, a people built on God's heart

It was never intended as a means of salvation

Second, God's promise was always intended for the whole world, not just the Jews

Paul says, "not only to those who are of the law..."

The Jews are certainly important to God

But so also are those who "have the faith of Abraham"

Those who believe by faith in what God has said are included

God's grace extends to all Jews and Gentiles who trust Him

5. vs. 17: The previous verse ends by saying that Abraham is "the father of us all"

Here, Paul quotes Gen. 17:5, where God says, "I have made you a father of many nations"

Abraham is the father of faith, because he believed God despite appearances

He was told he would father a child when he was nearly 100

He was told to sacrifice that son and moved to fulfill that despite what it meant

He believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if he was sacrificed

God truly gives life to the dead

To Abraham and Sarah's bodies despite them being advanced in age

To Jesus, who is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"

God created the world, bringing into being "things that were not"

6. vs. 18: The promise made to Abraham is repeated three times: Genesis 12, 15, and 17

In these promises, it is clear that the promise will move from Abraham to his lineage

Abraham "believed in hope", and Paul begins this verse with "Against all hope"

This hope is not wishful thinking

This hope is expectation that God will do what He says in His time

We live in hope/expectation of being with God because of His promise to us

"Against all hope" means that Abraham had no natural basis for believing God's promises

Childbirth for Abraham and Sarah would require a miracle

They trusted God to provide that without knowing how it would occur

7. vs. 19: Paul says that Abraham's faith was not weakened despite the fact he was old

Paul doesn't bring up Abraham's doubts in Gen. 15:2-3

He doesn't bring up Abraham and Sarah's attempts to "help" God thru Hagar

It should encourage us that Abraham was considered faithful despite these lapses

Paul focuses on Abraham's acceptance/belief in God's trustworthiness

Abraham knows he and Sarah are both too old to be producing children

But he also knows that God is not limited by human limitations

He can do what He wants in the way He wants

Paul uses Abraham's life as a model for others to follow

Believe in God's promises, even if the human way looks impossible

He will bring to pass what He has purposed

8. vs. 20: This verse restates the ideas of vs. 18-19

Here it is made clear that Abraham believed when he trusted in God's promises

It also connects trust as equalling the glorifying of God

We are called to trust in God, to act in faith and assurance of what He has promised

9. vs. 21: Here, it is emphasized that Abraham fully believed in and trusted God's words

"Being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised"

God's words are not idle, spoken just to say something

He made a promise to Abraham, and it will come to pass

10. vs. 22: This is a reminder of why God considered Abraham righteous

Abraham believed God and that became his foundation for life and behavior

It wasn't because Abraham had done good deeds or avoided evil

Paul is showing the contrast between following the Law and the life of faith

The first is built on command and obedience

The second is built on promises and trust

11. vs. 23: This verse uses Abraham as the model of faith which others can follow

It wasn't "credited to him" alone, says the verse

The implication is that the act of crediting righteousness extends to others as well

Anyone who does the same thing as Abraham gets the same reward

Abraham's faith was demonstrated by his actions

He didn't just believe; he acted in ways that showed His belief in God's promises

That is what is also expected of those who would follow Christ today

Our actions don't save us, but they do demonstrate the depth of our faith in God

12. vs. 24: Paul points out that the promise to Abraham extends to us as well

He says that "God will credit righteousness"

This seems to suggest it will happen in the future

Our text suggests it is a "now/not yet" situation

We are now part of God's kingdom because of our confession of faith

We are not yet experiencing the fullness of God's kingdom until we get to heaven

13. vs. 25: Paul finishes with the answer to "How did this come to be?"

Jesus died on a cross to pay the price for our sins

He wasn't a tragic figure or a victim of state violence

He was the promised Messiah, the Suffering Servant written about in Isaiah 53

His death was necessary to pay the price for sins

This process was completed when he rose from the dead

Application: This passage is a reminder to all that we do not achieve righteousness because of our own actions, but because of God's mercy in sending Jesus to die a sacrificial death for our benefit. When are counted as righteous, like Abraham, when we believe what God says about sin and redemption, and then act toward those two elements in the way that God says we must. We acknowledge that we are sinners, and we accept the fact that Jesus died for our sins so that we could be seen as righteous in God's eyes. We are credited with Jesus' righteousness, just as Abraham was credited with righteousness because of His faith in God's promises.

Prayer: Father God, help us to live a life that seeks to please You by trusting in Your promises and Your great love for all that You have created. Thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus, which we accept in faith as reconciling us to You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.