

Series: This Grace in which we stand - 1

WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FAITH

Romans 4: 1 – 12

Genesis 15: 1 – 6

Romans 5: 1 & 2, *this grace in which we stand*. **4:12**; *walk in the footsteps of the faith*. Whole chapter refers to Abraham the man of faith and also illustrates David who knew righteousness. The question before us is not how we change our life for God to accept us, not how to be Christians; but realise what God has done. He has conferred His righteousness upon us as His gift; not because we deserve it or have worked for it but because God has acted through the death of Christ His Son. Paul's emphasis is that Abraham was justified by faith, for only then can we *walk in the footsteps of the faith*: but what does this mean? To justify is to declare a person righteous. To declare that someone on trial before a judge is not guilty of any penalty but entitled to all the privileges of someone who has kept the law; acquitted.

'The essential gospel message - through Christ's death guilty sinners, once justly under wrath, come into a new relationship with God as His beloved sons, under grace'.¹ Then the contrary view; if we work hard to be good people, like balanced scales, won't that suffice when we die to escape judgment? Surely we can earn God's favour and be in His good books! Faith can only originate by the gift of God.

To understand justification by faith in Romans 4; Paul is writing to church people who were self-righteous, relied on religious tradition, their good religious works: the Cross left them cold. Paul formerly in same situation; not information but **revelation** by the Holy Spirit and **realisation**!! Paul's emphasis; no self-effort, no sacrifice, no church work nor obedience impresses God; and he uses two OT examples to show there is only one way of salvation whether past, present or future. OT people became believers in exactly the same way we do; justified by faith. No other way to enter the Kingdom of God: **Romans 3: 9 – 20 & 21 – 31** cf. **Galatians 3: 11**; *Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."* Now **Romans 4: 1 – 3**. The basis of our justification is only through what God has done in His grace; the impact of the Cross which cleanses us from all sin; past, present, future; **Genesis 15: 5 & 6**. This is either correct or false; no in between. Abraham was made right with God the same way as you and anyone

¹ J.I. Packer, *God's Words*, IVP, 1981, 139

else. The timeless Cross!! -- Our desire for recognition of works, church involvement, position, prestige. Our anger when informed that none of our contribution for which we receive human appreciation, bring us closer to God. Comment at funerals; 'He/she lived a good life'. Paul clearly teaches that God's justification of Abraham was an act of grace; not dependent upon any human contribution. Surely my belief, my faith, saves me!! **Romans 4: 4 & 5**; the word - *credited, reckon, counted*, means to put to another's account: **Philemon 18**. Paul did not owe Philemon anything but tells him to put anything Onesimus owes on Paul's account. That is essence of justification by faith, when God reckons/credits to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God puts it there as if it was in our account and in doing that, He clears all our debt, guilt and evil.

David; v6 – 8, & 9 – 12. Justification is a legal declaration, but in doing this God does not make us righteous; **we are declared righteous**. How? The righteousness of Christ is put to our account. **V4**, if I work for someone and he pays me for my work, he is not being gracious but paying what I am owed. There is no grace in that; it would be wrong if he did not pay me. **V5**, Paul tells us two things about this man. In contrast to v4, he does not work, he cannot present an account, he has nothing to recommend himself and falls short of the glory of God. He is evil, ungodly and wicked even if he is acceptable to society. To whom is Paul referring? To Abraham, whose background was idolatrous; Joshua 24.

'There are many people who think that they are worshipping God, but who are really worshipping themselves, worshipping their own goodness. They have made a god of their own and when they are truly confronted by God as He has manifested Himself in the Bible, they hate Him, they dislike Him. When God tells them that they are so sinful and so hopeless that they cannot save themselves, they resent it. When God tells them that nothing but the death of His Son can redeem them, they feel it is a personal insult. To them the Cross is an offence. Now that is to be ungodly'.²

Can you see that we cannot make ourselves righteous nor does Justification make us righteous? God justifies the wicked/ungodly. He does not first make us Godly and then justify us; He justifies those who are ungodly: like Saul. We are justified as we are without any works to commend ourselves and while we are still ungodly, even religious ungodly. – God puts the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ on us because of His death and resurrection, He sees us in Christ where He has placed us; we have His righteousness. He clothes us!

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans*, Banner of Truth, 172

Romans 4: 13 – 25; anyone who claims to live by the golden rule or does their best to keep any religious law is in darkness walking away from God; **v13 – 17**. Therefore, Abraham's faith illustrates the gospel of justification by faith. The object of his faith was centred in God's promise to make him the father of many nations; when he had no children and Sarah's womb was dead; **Genesis 15: 5 & 6 and 18: 11 & 12**. What was the result? Abraham was justified as righteous; **v16 – 25 & Galatians 3: 6 – 9**. God makes this promise to Abraham who was nearly 100 and Sarah in her 90's; that she will bear a child to him. He will be their heir and through him the nations of the earth will be blessed. Totally impossible by natural reasoning; so they need to look to the One who promises the miracle, not at the situation. Therefore faith means believing God entirely because He is God. Faith comes to all of us in the promises of God and we need to accept them and act upon them without doubting.

Jesus once told Peter that he was a man of little faith. Not that he had no faith but little faith, which means that there is opportunity for believing faith to be demonstrated. – Story of disciples in the boat with Jesus who was asleep during a violent storm with water coming into the vessel. Disciples woke Him, *Don't you care that we perish?* Jesus rebuked the storm and asked them, *Where is your faith?* They were limited in believing Jesus. – Similarly as in the demon possessed boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration when his distraught father cried to Jesus; *Lord I believe, help my lack of belief*. In these accounts there is faith/belief but it's weak and needs strengthening. So faith is based upon the name and character of God and His promises. Not trying something to see if it works. It must be based on what God says in Scripture.

When God spoke to Abraham He gave him the faith to believe the promise; but Abraham took matters into his own hand and thought he could make the promise happen. Result was birth of Ishmael who was outside the covenant promise. Basis of faith is trusting the Lord not circumstances or trying to help God out of a humanly impossible situation. – There was nothing natural in Abraham that responded to God. Faith is His gift of grace within us and we rest in Him without strain or tension; **v19 – 25**. Faith is holding on to the faithfulness of God; not focusing on difficulties nor looking at itself; not faith in faith. The key to faith is not what I am doing but God's faithfulness. So faith grows and develops as we know Christ better, but it is not our faith. Faith does not come from us but from the One who gives us faith – **all grace**. **V 22 – 24**, shows that Abraham's situation is the same as ours if we are in Christ. What was true of him is true of every person who is reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to become a Christian except by being justified by God.

The resurrection is the proof; **v25, cf. 8: 32**. *He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?* By whom was Jesus delivered up to death? By God, His Father; Jesus died but He was given over or delivered over to death. God the Father *gave up His only Son **FOR** us* ... ie. on account of our sins He was given over to death. God has taken all our sins, guilt, and shame and put them on His Son. *It is finished*. In raising His Son from the dead God is proclaiming that the work of our salvation is completed; we are justified.

Not our faith/belief/religion/church attendance that saves us. Only looking to the righteousness of Christ for we are clothed in His righteousness. There is never anything we can do. Like Abraham, we believe the word of God in spite of everything we know to be true about ourselves. The resurrection is the proof that the justification of all who believe is now complete.