

Faith's Progression

Romans 4

Romans 4:13-25: "For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but by righteousness of faith. For if they which are of law be heirs, faith is made vain, and the promise made of no effect. For law works wrath; but where no law is neither is there transgression. Therefore it is on the principle of faith, that it might be according to grace, in order to the promise being sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of Abraham's faith, who is father of us all, (according as it is written, I have made thee father of many nations,) before the God whom he believed, who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being; who against hope believed in hope to his becoming father of many nations according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And not being weak in faith, he considered not his own body already become dead, being about a hundred years old, and the deadening of Sarah's womb, and hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief; but found strength in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to do; wherefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now it was not written on his account alone that it was reckoned to him, but on ours also, to whom, believing on him who has raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned."

Let's pray:

Father, we are always grateful for Your Word. We confess before You we do not understand it all, but we know Your Words are spirit and life, and we ask You to breathe upon Your Word. Give us a deeper understanding of what these thirteen verses mean. Help us to understand what was accomplished in these thirteen verses, and what we have now because of the work of our Lord Jesus in these thirteen verses. We ask all of this that You would just speak to us this morning and help us to enter into the reality of what this means and not just have a doctrinal study of what this means. This we ask in Your precious name. Amen.

I think you know already the burden of our subject. One thing I learned in the study of the Word from those brothers who trained us was to read the Word, read the Word, and get to the point where you can outline the Word for yourself. Then maybe you can go to the commentaries before you get all those brain washings. You should find out for yourself what the Word says.

The last time we spoke was on the first part of Romans chapter 4:1-12. Today we will be completing this chapter of thirteen verses, 13-25. Now this whole chapter has to do with the continuation of this matter of justification by faith which was first brought to us in chapter 3:21-31. There is no more important thing for the Christian to know than this matter of justification by faith. You cannot begin the Christian life; it is our starting point. It is our launching pad. It is the beginning through which we enter into relationship with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. So that is the important thing.

The other thing, without justification by faith, the Christian life is not just difficult, (you know my favorite phrase.) it is impossible. We must know it; it is of this kind of importance.

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In this whole chapter four, Paul deals with a single man, Abraham. I thought it is curious when I read this so many times at Brother Kaung's instruction that Paul would devote a whole chapter to Abraham after he had finished explaining justification by faith to him. Now why is that so? It is because we do not just need to understand doctrine. That can become a hard system in which we understand the facts, but do we understand the reality of justification by faith?

Now Abraham is the Biblical illustration and the testcase of what justification by faith means. He is the inception of it. He is the beginning of it, but you cannot understand the reality of justification by faith unless you see it illustrated in a life. And the life that we see it illustrated in, that Paul is very clear about and the Bible is very clear about, is Abraham. So that is the reason he took, what some might consider a little parenthesis, so much time on Abraham. It is not a parenthesis at all; this is to be our experience as well.

The first part of Romans 4 I entitled "Believing God." It is faith's inception which means "the beginning." The last thirteen verses, 13-25, is "faith's progression." So what you have to understand is that we are introduced to Abraham in those first twelve verses where we find that in fact he was justified by faith alone. But then we discover in those last thirteen verses the progression of faith in a man's life. After all, God does not just want initial faith of believing in the Lord; He wants a people of faith who grow in faith, a people who progress in faith, a people who lay hold of faith as they live. So I believe that is an explanation of the two different parts of Romans 4.

We will look at the principle of faith, verses 13-16, a very important phrase when it comes to the Word of God. You have to know this which is the principle of faith. Secondly we will look at the power of God's promise. Promise is a very important element in these thirteen verses. I am repeating a verse I know but verses 16-20 is about the power of God's promise. The third thing is that something happens. Something wonderful happened to Abraham, and he became fully persuaded. That is not for Abraham alone, verses 21-22. Finally, there is the result which is the reckoning of faith in verses 23-25. So that is what we will be dealing with today.

The Principle of Faith

As we begin with the principle of faith, the dominant word in chapter 4 is "faith." It occurs six times, and you ought to notice this. This was a habit I developed from Brother Graham Scroggie, and I love this fact. I do not know if you have his little handbook, but if you do not have Scroggie's Bible Handbook, you are missing something. And I suggest you go find it, and if it is out of print maybe you can find it. But one thing Graham Scroggie did that I thought was so powerful is that he often ended his short summaries of every book with key words, and when you see the key words, you begin to understand the writers' emphasis. If you read through it glibly and do not discover the key words, you will miss the writer's point. So first of all, the most important word

in chapter four in this last section is “faith.” Why do you think that is so? It is simply because God is looking for a people of faith.

Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said in Luke 18 when He talked about the parable of the unjust judge? It was fully important that man ought always to pray and faint not. But when he came to the end of that, it almost seems a contradiction in this matter of prayer when He said, “Will the Son of Man (speaking of Himself) find faith when He comes on the earth?” That is quite an important statement of our Lord Jesus. In other words, at the end of everything, when He comes and finds a people, will that people be a people of faith like Abraham was? This is the point in that parable in Luke 18:1-8.

So this very important phrase in verse 16 is the principle of faith. The whole of the Christian life is based on this principle. God uses principles because they are His ways, and this is the way for His people, the principle of faith. If we do not understand the importance of it, we cannot live the Christian life.

The dictionaries define what principles are. It is quite interesting the way this human, worldly dictionary defines principles. As a matter of fact, when it uses the illustration that follows the definition it says, “The principle of Christianity.” I thought that was outstanding. Even the worldly dictionary said that it was illustration. But a principle is a fundamental truth, and this is the most fundamental of truths. It is a proposition that serves a foundation for a system. It is a foundational truth. It is more than that; if you look at it carefully it is a foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning, and the illustration is the basic principle of Christianity.

He begins in verse 13 with two words that Paul often used, and those words are *not* and *but*. Now we may think these are strange words. As a matter of fact, with my sort of dyslexia I missed these little words often when I am reading, and Linda reminds me when I miss a “the” or an “and,” but they were not little words to the Apostle Paul. They meant everything. By these simple words he made his point abundantly clear again and again. So when you look at verse 13 it says, “For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham or to his seed that he should be the heir of the world, but by righteousness of faith.”

Now these two things, law and faith, or the principle of law or by law, however you want to look at it, and the righteousness that comes by faith are totally contradictory principles. They are not the same thing. They are diverging roads which never meet. They are the antithesis of each other, and Paul wants to make that his first point in this last section: “Not by law but by righteousness of faith.” These two principals are clearly illustrated, the principle of law and the principle of faith.

I like what William R. Newell said, “Faith and law are contradictory principles. They are not the same, and we need to see that. And that is the point of the end of Romans chapter 4. You cannot understand the Old Testament, you cannot understand the New Testament, and you cannot understand the whole of the Bible unless you understand that these two principles are mutually exclusive. Now I want to make that very clear because when you go through it, it changes your world view of what the Christian life is. If we are under law, what does that mean? If we are

under the righteousness of faith, what does that mean? So it is very important, and this is why Paul began with this first. You begin to see that this phrase dominates Romans and Galatians.

Now Galatians is the companion book to Romans, but it is a more confined emphasis. As a matter of fact, Galatians deals with law and grace. That is all that it really deals with. Romans is much more broad than that in its sixteen chapters. It goes to quite a bit more, but both of them are centered in explaining these two principles to the people of God—what we do not live by and what we do live by. So these two divergent roads is the point of the principle of faith.

For all of you to understand the book of Romans, you must understand that these are the principal theme verses, and this is the importance of Romans.

Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings; for it is God’s power to salvation, to every one that believes, both to Jew first and to Greek; for righteousness of God is revealed therein, on the principle of faith, to faith: according as it is written. But the just shall live by faith.”

This is the whole point of Romans. Brothers and sisters, how do we live the Christian life? Is it by religious rules? Is it by imposed mandates, divine mandates, nevertheless? And say, “You shall do this.” “Or you shall do that. Or you shall live this way or you shall live that way. Or is it by life through the righteousness of faith which is all based on grace? If you do not understand that, you will live a confused Christian life. You will constantly be under the guilt of your failures. You will constantly be contemplating, in one sense, how miserable you are. If you do not believe me, read Romans 7 because it is going to be awhile before we get there. Paul was a miserable creature when he thought he had to live under law. It was only when he discovered the freedom and the grace and the power of living under the righteousness of faith that his life was totally transformed. That is this last section.

This phrase “the principle of faith,” occurs in Romans 4:16, 5:1, 9:30 and 9:32. But much more prevalent this phrase occurs eight times in Galatians. I will not give you all those verses.

In Galatians he made a point to understand the principle of faith. You see it again and again. I will read one verse just to highlight it.

Galatians 2:16: “But knowing that a man is not justified on the principle of the works of law nor but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified on the principle of the faith of Christ; and not of works of law; because on the principle of works of law no flesh shall be justified (before God).”

So this was the importance of what he left for us. We have to understand it. We have to realize that it is the most important and most foundational principle of the Christian life, and that is what Abraham discovered 430 years before the law was given.

If you do not believe me, read Galatians 3:17: “One covenant that was established for Abraham is not excluded because a later covenant, 430 years later, followed it.” The proceeding law was the foundation. Why the law came in I know is a mystery to most people. But let me tell you first of all for you Gentiles, when I was in Israel, they called us Goyims which I think is a slang and probably a little bit of a dirty word. I am a Goyim, but I have to look it up. We are Gentiles, we do not have the law. You do not live under the law. It is a mystery to me that Gentile believers

who call themselves Messianic Christians go back and embrace the law. It was never intended to be. Most of you in this room, unless you are Jews, blood Jews, you are not under the law, not at all. And therefore, it makes it clear in these verses that righteousness of faith came to Abraham so that all the seed, the nations, the Gentiles, the Jews could be included, and no one would be excluded. Just think, if righteousness was based on the law, every one of us would be excluded; none of us would be included. That is what this section is dealing with.

Nothing man can do by his religious acts or trying to follow divine rules can lead to justification. There is nothing you can do! That is the story of Abraham. He believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness. That is the revelation of Abraham—nothing man can do. All that man does is excluded except for believing God.

Romans 4:14: “For if they which are of law be heirs, faith is made vain, and the promise made of no effect.”

That is a very clear direct statement. He could not have been clearer. That is why I call this book a masterpiece. It is abundantly clear.

Verse 15: “For law works wrath; but where no law is neither is there transgression.”

The law, brothers and sisters, was never meant to justify. Never! It was meant to convict; it was meant to expose our sins; it was meant to show us that we could not live up to that holy requirement. It is just and holy, but the purpose of the law was meant to expose sin.

Galatians 3:24 talks about it in this way:

“The law has been our tutor up to Christ.” In the King James Version, it uses the word “school master” to bring us to Christ, “that we may be justified on the principle of faith.” That is what it says. Granted, the law was a hard school master.

You know, when I went to school, and I know you hate old people standing up here giving these illustrations. I did not walk ten miles in the snow and back twenty miles in the snow. Nothing like that. But I had a school master who happened to be my football coach, Coach Bailey, and he was also the head of discipline for Brooklyn Junior High School. Now I know you call it Middle School, and that still confuses me. I am so old that we called it Junior High School, and I remember Coach Bailey had a paddle in his office. He was the head of discipline, and he used the paddle on students. I know several of you parents are going to faint outright when you think that a principal or vice principal, which he was, would actually paddle a kid. I am going to tell you a little secret, I think we would be better off if we still had paddles in schools. (I got an amen for the first time.) I am sorry you young people, I know it is unthinkable to you. But I will never forget Coach Bailey caught me one time. Because my mother was the cigarette operator for Philip Morris, (now they have a cleaner name), but that was when tobacco was king here and in Petersburg. My mother would have these bags of Marlboros, and I became the Marlboro man in the neighborhood, and all of the teenagers would come to me for Marlboros. I remember one day I had a total lack of sense to be in the men’s bathroom in Brooklyn Junior High School smoking a Marlboro, and in walks Coach Bailey. It was a terrible thing; I will never forget it. First it’s the office, and then he

said to me because I was one of his athletes, "Wait until this afternoon." I think the time in the office was easier than the afternoon.

Brothers and sisters, the whole point is that the law is a school master, a harsh school master that leads us to Christ. That was the purpose. It was to show us our unrighteousness. It is like a giant divine magnifying glass, even with one of those special little extra magnifying holes where you see sin for what sin really is. That was the only purpose of the law. It has unyielding demands. If you do not think so read James 2:10: "For whoever shall keep the whole law and shall offend in one point, he has come under the guilt of breaking all."

Think of that! I would say I was happy about getting 95 in school, as rare as that was in high school. But think of it! One point in the Ten Commandments! just think of it. That is the terror of the law. Now do you understand why Paul said, "Not by law but by righteousness of grace, righteousness of faith"? The law is impossible for us. The purpose of it was just to expose.

Romans 3:20 says a wonderful thing: "Wherefore by works of the law no flesh shall be justified before him, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

In chapter 10 of Romans it talks about election and the children of Israel, the nations, and the mystery of election. It says very clearly that the problem with the Jews was that they trusted in a righteousness that was based on the law, the outward, and they did not trust in a righteousness that was based on the principle of faith, and that is God's main issue with them. Now you might say, "This seems like a bait and switch. Why did God give them the law that they could never keep to begin with? It was in order for them to see, they would know, and they would enter in to what it means by living by faith. That is the whole of it."

Verse 16 is his summery in this first section. And there is a big word that Paul uses often in his writings that is translated into English, and it is "therefore."

Romans 4:16: "Therefore, it is on the principle of faith, that it might be according to grace."

It is grace. Grace and law could not be any more different. Grace is something that we do not deserve, and it is something we cannot do in ourselves. Law is something that we try to do to meet divine commands, and that was what he was dealing with.

It says some pretty amazing things in this chapter about Abraham; it says that he should be heir.

In verse 13 it says, "The promise is sure to all his seed."

In verse 16 it says, "Who is father of us all."

I do not know if you understand well the sovereignty of God in His choosing of Abram before the foundation of the world. But do you know that the definition of the name Abram, the man from an idol family, that unbeliever from Ur of the Chaldees, is "High Father?" And you know when the Lord changed his name to Abraham in chapter 17 of Genesis, it means "Father of the multitude." He is father of those that walk in the faith of Abraham. But in one sense, this is not just talking about Abraham, it is talking about *the* heir." Abraham was not the heir of the world, but our Lord Jesus is *the* heir.

Do you remember that marvelous parable about the father (an illustration of a vineyard talking about God in all of creation) building a vineyard, and he puts a wine vat around it, and he lets it out to husbandmen in Matthew 21:33-42. In that parable the time for receiving the master's fruit came, and he sent bondmen and they killed the one and beat the others. They did all these awful things so the master sent other bondmen, who were prophets. He was always sending people to the children of Israel that their eyes may be opened, but because of the blindness of the law their eyes were closed, and they could not see it. So they beat the one, killed the others, and did it again and again. Then this master had a brilliant idea. He said, "I will send to them my only son; they will respect my son." What did he do to them? When his son came, they said to these people of the world, "This is the heir." That was their words.

Christ is the Heir. Everything we get is because of Christ, and through this One who is *the* heir, they killed Him. Now don't you think that is a history of creation from the beginning of creation in Genesis chapter 1 all the way up to the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross? That is what that parable of the householder is all about.

It is not just that, it says the promise is sure to all His seed. This is not just about Abraham because if you read Galatians Paul makes it very clear that His seed is always in singular, and he said, "His seed is Christ." That is who the seed is. That is who we are children of. It is not Abraham. He might have been the father of the faithful or the father of those who believed his righteousness by faith, but he is not the father of all.

You remember when the Lord Jesus came to Mary of Magdalen and appeared to her after His resurrection and He said, "Go tell the brethren, 'but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God' (see John 20:17)." This is the Father of all. Thank God for this chapter where we see clearly the one thing God is looking for, a people that understand the principle of faith.

The Power of God's Promise

The second thing is that we not only need to understand the principle of faith, but we need to also understand the power of God's promise. Faith can just be a lecture unless you understand that it is all wrapped up in the promise of God. That is the whole answer. The whole thing is because someone promised He will do it, and He never fails in His promise. This is what we see in verse 16-20.

Righteousness of faith is based only on the promise of God. Abraham did nothing to receive justification by faith. If you read this chapter you will find the reason Paul spent so much time on Abraham; it was to illustrate once and for all that all he did was believe God. That is what he heard. It was not what he did; it was his response. I think that is clearly the answer. How we must see the power of God's promise! It is part of faith's progression. Not only do we initially believe and are saved, and for many Christians that is the whole of their Christian life. I think I heard it last night from a brother, that he was happy with that. They know they have eternal life, and that is all they need. But in the progression of faith, there is something much more than that. We can begin to discover the power of God's promises, and that is exactly what we see in Abraham.

Verse 17: "(According as it is written, I made thee father of many nations,) before the God whom he believed, who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being."

This is what Abraham experienced. The Lord quickened the dead. Abraham was dead; it was impossible. That is a strong word to say about somebody: "You are dead!" But that is exactly what Ephesians 2 says about us: "We were dead in our trespasses and sins." There was no way that you could become righteous. It was impossible, you were not even alive. Abraham was not alive when he came to the promise.

You remember the story when he was told by God in Genesis 17 that he would receive a son. He fell down and laughed. It was more graphic than that, and I love the way it is put in the Bible. He fell on his face, laughing, and then he denied that he had laughed. And Sarah was no better. In chapter 18 you remember three men came, and by the way I think one of those three men was God Himself. I think it is one of those preincarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus because if you read what that One says to Abraham, it is in the first person. It is God speaking to him. So God had to appear to Abraham to show him the power of the promise, and God has to appear to us to show us the power of the promise.

Verse 18 is the story about Sarah. She was off making the food for those three men, based on Abraham's instructions. So this One who spoke, who I believe was the Lord Himself, said, "What about Sarah? At this time of the year Sarah will have a seed, bear a child." And Sarah, who was in the tent listening as she prepared the food, was laughing, and God said, "Did you laugh?" She was no better than Abraham. Now if you think Abraham was righteous in himself, both of these dear ones in the Old Testament lied to God. Abraham said, "I did not laugh." God was very patient; He knows us altogether. He said, "Okay, we will name the boy Isaac, which means 'laughter.'" I think that was the genius of God. Then when Sarah said, "I did not laugh," God just said, "You laughed," and that was the end of the story.

Oh how impossible it is for us unless we really see the promise of God, there is nothing we can do. There is nothing we can do in ourselves, but when you see the promise of God, there is power in that promise to help us and to make us be able to believe.

In Genesis 18 do you remember what the explanation was that God had to say to Abraham?

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" That was His word. Is anything too hard for the Lord? He could not believe it. He fell on his face laughing and then lied about laughing.

Then you remember Mary, the mother of Jesus. When the Lord appeared to Mary, He told her that she would have a Son and her Son would be Jesus. And then He explained Himself and said, "For nothing shall be impossible with God." Why is that? It is because the promises of God have resident within them such power that He can make the impossible possible.

That was the story of Abraham. His body was dead; he could not have a son, and it says, "He considered the deadening of Sarah's womb; She could not have a son. It was not that it was going to be difficult, and they would just need some fertility drugs. It was utterly impossible except for one difference. There was a promise, and that promise had incredible power.

Brothers and sisters, do you know that? Do you know that the promise has incredible power?

Verse 19-20: "And not being weak in faith, he considered not his own body already become dead, being about a hundred years old, and the deadening of Sarah's womb, and he hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief, but he found strength in faith, giving glory to God."

Brothers and sisters, something happened in Abraham. When the promise became reality, he was strengthened on the inside. Now if you think this progression of faith means Abraham's faith got stronger, you are wrong. I think Brother Darby had enlightened thought when he said, "This is not Abraham's faith; this is faith that is given." This is faith that is made available to us when we start to think on the promises of God, He awakens in us, and it is called an inward straightening of faith that is not the faith of Abraham; it is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. I appreciate so much that Romans uses that phrase, "the faith *of* the Lord Jesus Christ." I am sorry that there are many translations that translated that faith "*in* the Lord Jesus Christ." I think it is far more than that. God does something through that promise, and He puts that faith within us. And there is an inward strengthening as He puts that faith in us. It literally means Darby said, "gifted with strength." He did not have the strength; his body was dead. She did not have the strength; her womb was dead, but God did something when He made that promise. He came into them and He birthed faith in them which was not of themselves. This is Romans 4. How wonderful it is! And this is what it means, dear brothers and sisters, about the righteousness of faith.

How we need a right reaction to God's promise. If we have a right reaction, then God's promise can transform us. But we need first of all to understand that it is not our strength. It is not our path, it is not our faith. It is something that is gifted, something that is done inside of us when God grants us revelation and we see the promise. This is what "the gifting of faith" means in Ephesians 2:8. How weak is our faith! It says when that happened, something happened in Abraham. He did not hesitate at the promise of God. Isn't that wonderful! When God strengthened him, when God gave him that revelation: "This is My promise; is anything too hard for the Lord?" inside he was transformed, and he could then believe the promise of God in the power of the promises of God.

Sarah's own testimony, as it states in Hebrew 11:11 was, "Through faith also Sarah herself (notice what it says, underline in your Bible) received strength." It does not say, "Sarah had strength." It says, "She received strength to conceive and was delivered a child when she was past age (impossible) because (listen to the *because*; it is an important phrase.) because she judged Him faithful who promised."

What a difference! *What a difference!* This is the progression of faith. When we come to the place in ourselves when we say, "Lord, for us it is equally impossible, but Lord, would You ignite in me that inner strengthening, and would You do that gifting of faith so that I too will not hesitate at the promises of God?"

You remember the doubting Thomas, poor fellow. All his life he will have to live with the legacy that he was a doubter and did not believe. And you remember, he said with all of his strength, "I will not believe unless I take my finger and put it in the wounds of His hands, and I will not believe unless I take my hand and put it into the wound in His side." Then something marvelous happened; the Lord appeared to him. I suppose he got a little more humble at that point. The Lord said, "Thomas Didymus, apparently he had a twin brother; I wonder if they were

both doubters. But the Lord said, “Come here, come here, and take your finger and put it in My hand. And He said, “Come here, take your hand and put it in My wound from the spear.” And you know, it is clear that Thomas did not do it. I think Thomas was convinced. God strengthened the doubter to believe. The Lord did have a little more direct word for him. He said, “You believe because you see; blessed are those who believe and do not see.” But I believe in that moment the doubter was changed. How marvelous! This is the power of God’s promise.

Fully Persuaded

Then we will look at this matter of fully persuaded in 4:21:

“And being fully persuaded (talking about Abraham) that what he has promised, (talking about God) he is able also to do.”

That is the secret. Have we come to the point in faith’s progression that we are now fully persuaded, not in our own circumstances, not in our own strength, no longer in our own abilities, but simply the One who promised is able also to do it. That is a key change for a believer. When we come to that point that we can say like the Apostle Paul, “I am fully persuaded, not because of what I can lay hold of, but simply because You promise, and when You promise it can never fail. I think this is as clear as anything. This is the testimony of Abraham and this is to be the testimony of every believer.

“Fully persuaded” is Paul’s phrase. If you look it up, no one else used that phrase. Paul said at the end of this letter I think it is in chapter 16: “Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind.” He was talking about days and things like that. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind. That was Paul’s key to them.

Then when he wrote of his son, Timothy in his last writing, he said in II Timothy, “thou hast been fully persuaded” (see 3:14). Oh, that we too would become fully persuaded. I think that was the clear aim of faith’s progression in chapter 4 of Romans, that we would be like Abraham, and we too would say, “We are fully persuaded.” Remember the Apostle Paul used that as his own testimony five times in his epistles. He said, “I am persuaded.” That was Paul’s testimony, that was Abraham’s testimony, that was Sarah’s testimony. And that is to be our testimony in the progression of faith.

Philippian 1:6 says, “Having confidence of this very thing, that he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ’s day.”

That is the secret of being fully persuaded. It is believing Him who promised—not believing our circumstances, not looking at our condition, not looking at our failures, not looking at where all things are askew, but looking solely unto the One who promised because only He is able to do it.

The Reckoning of Faith

Verses 23-25: “Now it was not written on his account alone that it was reckoned to him, but on ours also, to whom, believing on him who has raised from among the dead, Jesus our Lord,

who has been delivered for our offenses and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned.”

This was Paul’s concluding thought in this chapter. It was not just written for him alone. Brothers and sisters, had it been written for Abraham alone it would be simply an Old Testament history lesson, and sometimes I think that is the way we look at the Old Testament. We marvel at these men and women of faith like Deborah. Look at them, oh that I would be like them. Well, did you know it is God’s point that you will be like them? That was the whole point. That was the concluding thought. That was the summary of the instruction in Romans about Abraham. It was not written for his benefit alone, but for our benefit also. “Believing on him who has raised from among the dead, Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offenses and has been raised for our justification, it shall be reckoned.”

Brothers and sisters, I think that word “**OUR**” ought to be in all capitals and all bold letters. If I could print the Bible again, that is what I would do. It was written for us. What happened to Abraham was not just for Abraham. What happened to Sarah was not just for Sarah. What happened to those ones in Hebrews 11 of the hall of faith was not just for them, because without us they will not be made perfect is the way Hebrews 11 concludes. He is looking for a people for whom He can say, “Now there is faith.” That is what the reckoning of faith means.

I told you the importance of this word “reckoning.” If you do not see it in the book of Romans, you will never understand the book of Romans. It means, “God did something all of His own doing and applies it to us, therefore He sees it as true. It does not matter whether you see it as true. It matters that He sees it as true. That is the reckoning of faith in the progression of faith. God at last says, “It is true.” It was not just true of Him, it was not just true of her, it is true of you, and we are ourselves reckoned righteous.

I love what one writer said and put it better than I can. I told you often that this book of Romans is the divine courtroom and the divine Judge. This is what he said; it is quite remarkable.

“Our justification is a sovereign judicial act.” Do you understand what that means? It means you had nothing to do with it but accept it. And when He gave you faith, it strengthened you in the inner man, and when He gifted you with faith, you believed it. And that is the only reason you are saved. There is no other reason.

He went on to say, “When a sinner is to be justified, righteousness is what he is not.” Some people fail here. They say, “I am now righteous.” No! You are not. You are reckoned as righteous. God sees you as righteous. God claims you as righteous because of the righteous work on the cross. You are not righteous; you are confusing sanctification with justification, and that is the end of this progress, faith’s progress. We are reckoned as righteous. This is what it means. This must be every Christian’s experience.

II Peter 1:4 speaks about the power of the promises of God.

“Through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the correction that is in the world through lust.”

Conclusion

Now we often talk about the Bible as a book of superlatives, but this takes it to a whole other level. It does not talk about just the promises; it talks about the great promises. It does not just talk about the great promises; it talks about the exceeding great promises. It does not just talk about the exceeding great promises; it talks about the precious promises, and then it says the most remarkable thing. If it were not in this Bible, you would all call me a liar. But he said, "By these acts of God you will become a partaker of the divine nature. Can you be anymore than that? It cannot be any better than that. Now be careful what you do with that verse. This does not talk about man becoming God; this does not talk about you becoming divine. It talks about you partaking of the divine nature through the promises of God. Now Christ is in you which is the hope of glory, the mystery hidden for the ages in God but now has been made manifest.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is faith's progression. Abraham did not just believe it one moment and it was over; Abraham continued. God was continually working in him to the point that he no longer looked at his circumstances. He no longer looked at the impossibilities, but he considered the promises from the one who could not lie, and he found that when he did that, something miraculously happened within, and it was the gifting of faith that changed him forever. And the end of it was that he became fully persuaded. Then Paul concluded that it was not written for his benefit alone but for ours. May God find a people like that today. This is what He is looking for. This is precisely what he meant when he said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" That is what He is after.

Lord, we commit to You Your Word, that Your Words may become more real to us. Lord, I do not know if we can explain these things. We inadequately try, but only the Holy Spirit can take words of life and put them in us so that what You have promised You are able also to do. But we are asking that You change our way of looking at things. Do not just let us look at law, what is required of us, but let us learn to live by the righteousness of faith which is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This we ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen.