

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation

TITLE: So What Exactly Is Faith?

SCRIPTURE: **Romans 4:13-25**

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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In the first three chapters of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul lays out the black cloth of human sin and rebellion against God, but then he holds up the glittering diamond of the gospel for all to see. The Gospel—the good news that has come to us through Jesus—reveals/puts on display—a “righteousness that comes to us from God” (1:17)—meaning—*God has made a way for all people to be put into a right relationship with God through faith in Christ apart from the law*—apart from trying hard to obey religious rules and rituals. (3:21-23, 24, 28) In 4:1-12 Paul has showed that Abraham was put right with God by faith alone—before he was circumcised and before God gave the law to Moses. In our passage for study today (4:13-25), Paul continues to point to Abraham to help us understand what it means to be “justified by faith apart from the law” and in so doing, he unpacks for us the nature of saving faith.

**Paul's Big Idea throughout this section: We are put right with God by trusting in the promises of God. But what exactly is faith? What does it mean to have faith?**

According to this passage... *Faith is trusting in the promises of God.*

There are several implications here that we need to unpack.

1. Trusting in God's promises means taking God *at his Word*.
2. Trusting in God's promises means trusting what God says *in his Word*.
  - Faith is not making something up in your imagination and trying really hard to believe that God will give you what you want.
  - Biblical faith is faith in what God has promised us in his Word.
3. Trusting the promises of God means *facing the facts*.
  - The greatest obstacle to faith is not believing God *can* do something; it's demanding to know *how* he will do it before we step out in faith.
  - Faith rests in **WHAT** God promises, not in knowing **HOW** God will do what he promises.

4. For us, trusting the promises of God means resting in the promise of the gospel - that we are forgiven and put right with God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (4:23-25).

*For Discussion* —

When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn, but also an ear to share with others what you learn. Keep that in mind as you discuss today's message. How do you need to internalize this message so you could share this Good News with people who are confused about what makes a person right with God?

1. How does this passage teach us that faith is simply trusting in the promises of God?
2. Which of the illustrations used in the message—trusting in the word of a doctor, a lawyer, a friend resonates with you? What's a story from your life where you put your trust in a promise someone made to you? What makes it easy to trust someone? (hint: *they have proven themselves to be trustworthy*)
3. Discuss what is meant by the statement—"Faith is not making something up in your imagination and trying really hard to believe that God will give you what you want. Why is this so? ...What is biblical faith founded upon?
4. Why is it important to face the facts that sometimes challenge our faith rather than ignore them? Why is optimism—hoping everything will work out for the best—not the same thing as faith?
5. Talk about a time when not knowing how God would do something made trusting him more difficult?
6. How do we grow in our faith? (v.20)