

† *A Matter of Faith*

- *I'm going to describe a word, you guess what it is. Can't be seen, touched, heard. Without it you wouldn't get in a car, sit on ski-lift, go to the doctor, or eat sushi. Millions of people deny they need it, but it is essential to everyday life, to relationships of any kind, and to major league baseball. It can strengthen the weakest and cripple the strongest, and without it every world religion would cease to exist.*
- *??? FAITH! CONTINUING IN ROMANS...*
- *Definition emerging- not just belief, but entrusting ourselves into the hands of someone/something other than ourself. CHAIRLIFT EXAMPLE*
- *NEW COVENANT BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW- PURPOSE OF FAITH- for us to ENTRUST... enter into an active, trusting, relationship with God- with HIM at the center. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? How does that work itself out in life? THIS IS WHERE PAUL IS TAKING US as we move deeper into Romans, but the FIRST, AND PRIMARY purpose of faith in God is the GREAT PROCLAMATION 3:21*

† *Christianity's great proclamation:* Hopelessly separated from God on our own, we may receive *God's Righteousness* through FAITH in Jesus Christ.

<sup>3:21</sup> But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

- *This is where Christianity is radically different from every other system of philosophy and religious thought: for all these systems, through history, in some way, a persons relationship with their God is based upon their PERFORMANCE- be it moral performance or religious rituals, everything eventually boils down to some set of rules or criteria for what they must DO to be in right standing- to receive the blessing- of God.*
- *The secular world is really no different, for there, our sense of worth, significance, lovability, right standing is based upon the 'law' of cultural and societal norms of whatever social group we are part of, and the God we perform for is whomever- or whatever- we grant controlling influence in our lives and whose blessing we seek, starting with ourselves.*
- *THIS IS WHERE Christianity stands alone in beautiful contrast- because God has proclaimed that our right standing with him, our access to him, and our experience of his mercy, love, compassion, goodness- HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS- has NOTHING to do with our performance, and everything to do with GOD'S PROMISE- His Gift of new life, that we receive by FAITH!*
- *For the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of believers in Rome, this was RADICAL NEWS. EVERYTHING about their lives to this point had taught them that God's acceptance was based upon their moral and religious performance - what Paul calls 'works'.*
- *And so, because it's such an important point, Paul takes his case for faith to the next level...*

† *Furthering the case for Faith:* The example of ABRAHAM

- *Father Abraham! For the jews in the church, and even the Roman gentiles who had come to know some of the Jewish history, using Abraham as an example is the trump card. For*

**the Israelites, everything came from Abraham. SO, if rightness with God is really all by faith, the showing this was true for Abraham would fully make the case.**

- **Remember- as a Jew in time of Christ (even now), there were THREE things that gave you certainty that YOU were a child of God... LAW, CIRCUMCISION, and that you were a CHILD OF ABRAHAM.**
- **This is longer section- all of chap 4, but really one point. EVEN FOR ABRAHAM, his rightness with God- God's righteousness to him- came from the one fact that he had FAITH IN GOD. Because of that, Jesus DBR would provide justification for Abraham, just as for everyone else who had faith in God up to the life of Christ, and just as it does for US.**

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?

**(Salvation by faith)**<sup>2</sup> If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.<sup>3</sup> What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation.<sup>5</sup> However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.<sup>6</sup> David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven,

whose sins are covered.<sup>8</sup> Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”<sup>(psalm 32)</sup>

– **Now Paul turns to issue of Circumcision-**

<sup>9</sup> Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? **(Paul is asking- does CIRC have any more significance?)** We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness.<sup>10</sup> Under what circumstances was it credited? *Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!*<sup>11</sup> And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.<sup>12</sup> And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

– **Circumcision means nothing!**

– **Galatians 5 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**

– **FOR US? No religious tradition means anything...**

<sup>13</sup> It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world **(Abrahamic covenant/Gen 12- That he would be blessed, and whole world would be blessed through him)**, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.<sup>14</sup> For if those who depend on the law are heirs **(part of Abrahams family)**, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless,<sup>15</sup> because the law brings wrath. *And where there is no law there is no transgression. (we will come back to this)*

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law **(Jews)** but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. **He is the father of us all.**<sup>17</sup> As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

<sup>18</sup> Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

– **Paul just completely redefined the meaning of the ‘Abrahamic covenant’- the ‘nations’ that God spoke of in Genesis 12 would not be through literal birth, physical lineage, but SPIRITUAL- the Holy nation of believers in Jesus- WE are the children of Abraham, because BY FAITH, we become the children of GOD.**

<sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.<sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> *being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*<sup>22</sup> This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” **(Gen 15)**

<sup>23</sup> The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone,<sup>24</sup> but also for us, to whom God will credit

righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

#### ✠ Why this is SO encouraging!

- **Aside from the miracle that God redeems us, justifies us, makes us RIGHT... by faith... This is encouraging because, referring to Abraham, Paul says “didn’t weaken in his faith... did not waiver in belief”....**
- **Do you know anything about the life of Abraham? One disaster after another? In fact, if you looked at the entire OT, and asked “who is a major character who didn’t believe God could do what he had promised... ABE!**
- **Many stories, HAGAR chief among them.**
- **IF ABE is picture of a person with strong faith, that God responded to with Gift of HIS VERY LIFE, THEN FRIENDS, THERE IS HOPE FOR US!**

#### ✠ The Greatest Blessing

<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup> However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. <sup>6</sup> David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup> Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” (psalm 32)

- **Who did God reveal that to? DAVID. LIAR. ADULTERER. MURDERER.**
- **Why do we think we are blessed?.. (my sin, oh the...)**

#### ✠ The Purpose of Faith

- **So much confusion- frankly, bad teaching- about faith. We will explore this much more as we move deeper into Romans- but for now, friends, the great purpose of FAITH is not for us to somehow move God to act on our behalf... THE MIRACLE OF FAITH- the gift we receive when we Believe He is who He says He is, and we ENTRUST ourselves to Him... is HIS GIFT OF MAKING US RIGHT WITH HIM. Removing the barriers, Giving us his goodness, his RIGHTEOUSNESS, and In Christ, His very life.**

<sup>23</sup> The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup> but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup> He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

- **Church, because the purpose of faith is to bring us into a relationship with God, to make us NEW- we also have the promise of the POWER of faith in our life going forward. Much more on this, but for now, one last look at Abraham...**

#### ✠ The Power of Faith

<sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

- **Against all hope, when it came down to it, Abraham was strengthened in his faith, gave glory to God, and trusted.**
- **Question- what has God promised you that you need to be persuaded he will keep? In the midst of whatever life is dealing you right now...**
  - **You are forgiven. Made right. Free from shame**
  - **Your life has meaning, significance- God use you**
  - **You have holy spirit- change you, fruit...**
  - **Life that is free from bondage**