

Justification by Grace Through Faith: The Explanation

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[0:00] We'll take your Bibles tonight and we're going to try to go rather rapidly through Romans 4 verses 18-22.

! Now those are several verses but I think we can work our way through these pretty quickly tonight. I'm going to go ahead and read the text. Our subject, of course, as you should know, is salvation by grace through faith.

And all that Paul has been teaching us about that. So let me read, starting with verse 18. Who, and he's speaking of Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope, believed, so that he became the father of many nations according to what was spoken.

So shall your descendants be. And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead since he was about a hundred years old and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God and being fully convinced that what he had promised, that is what God had promised, he was also able to perform.

[1:25] And therefore, it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now again, we've been talking about salvation by grace through faith. And I'm not going to go back and do any kind of review other than to maybe just mention some of the main categories we have seen really early on in chapter 3, starting with chapter 3.

We've seen this truth, salvation by grace through faith. We've seen it declared. We have also looked at how Paul illustrated it.

We have considered how he argued for it. And we've looked at the passages that deal with that. And now, really, in these verses, we have it explained.

Explained, in a sense. Explained. Now, what we want to explain about salvation by grace through faith is, what kind of faith is it?

We've been talking about justification. We've been talking about salvation. Talked a little bit about grace and faith, kind of in name only. But what kind of faith was it?

[2:42] I think that's probably a pretty important question. Well, let me just offer an answer to that in the form of another question. And the question would be, what kind of faith did Abraham have?

There's the answer to our question. What kind of faith did he have? In verse 22 of chapter 4, and we studied this some weeks ago, the Bible says, or in chapter 3, the Bible says about Abraham's faith, and therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.

He believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. That describes his faith. But just what kind of faith does God reward with salvation?

Or with righteousness? And the answer, again, is the kind of faith Abraham had. That's our answer. Verse 3, here in this chapter, and we've already looked at it, but let me remind you of what it says, and it's really a quote from the Old Testament, from Genesis.

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And so there we have it again declared, but what we need are the particulars about this faith, this kind of faith, this faith.

[3:57] We need it explained to us, or as some put it, splained. Got to have it splained, you know, to us. And that is what we have here in these verses, in verses 18 through 21, really.

So let me just list them in the following way. Okay, Abraham's faith, number one, was secured by the Word of God. That's the first thing Paul says as he explains the kind of faith Abraham had.

It must be secured, true faith, real faith, is secured by the Word of God. Number two, and then we'll kind of flesh these out a little bit, but let me give them to you to begin with.

His faith, number two, was strengthened by the ways of God. Number three, his faith was surrendered to the work of God.

And then finally, his faith was steadfast in the will of God. That's how we're going to have Abraham's faith described to us. So let's take each of these descriptions of Abraham's faith, take them, each one individually.

[5:02] First of all, his faith, Abraham's faith, was secured in the Word of God. Secured in the Word of God. Abraham took God at his Word.

That's what saving faith is all about. Takes God at his Word. Look at what he says there again in verse 18. Speaking of Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope, believed.

Or some other translations would have it hoped against hope. In hoping against hope. Which is kind of a somewhat of a contradiction. But so he hoped against hope.

And in hoping against hope, he believed so that he became the father of many nations according to what was spoken. Now there's the key phrase there.

He hoped against something that was hopeless. That he could be the father of many nations. But he hoped in that because God said he would be.

[6:06] God had spoken to Abraham. He spoke to him. And what did he say to him? Well, Paul gives us a little brief snippet of it. And then we'll go back here in Genesis and look at the full thing again.

And this is what God said. This was his Word. He said, so shall your descendants be. Let's look back at Genesis chapter. Let's go all the way back to chapter 15.

I may refer back a few more chapters. But let's look at chapter 15 first. And let's just. I just want to point some of this out to you. As we're describing Abraham's faith.

What kind of faith was it? What sort of faith was it? It believed God's Word. It was secured in his Word. And so here in chapter 15 we have these words. After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram.

He was still named Abram at this point. The Word came to Abram in a vision saying, Do not be afraid. Abram, I am your shield.

[7:07] Your exceedingly great reward. Now this is. And he's going to go on and restate the covenant he has already made with Abram.

Something he had already promised Abram. Back there actually in chapter 12. Look back just a couple of chapters. And we'll get back to chapter 14 again.

Or 15 here in a minute. But here's where he said. What he said to Abraham. The Lord said to Abraham. Get out of your country. From your family. From your father's house. To a land that I will show you.

And I will make you a great nation. And I will bless you. And make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you.

And I will curse him who curses you. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Alright. So now this is God once again a few years later.

[8:08] Re-establishing that. Reminding Abraham of that promise he had made to him. As he called him out of his pagan land. And promised him.

And now he's reminding him. I'm your exceedingly great reward. Now what's Abraham's response here in verse 2. But Abraham said. Or Abram said. Lord God.

What will you give me? Seeing I go childless. And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. Then Abraham said. Look. You have given me no offspring. Indeed. One born in my house is my heir. Not his offspring. Not his son.

And so this pretty logical response to God. Don't you think? God has promised these things to Abram. And that he is going to be. He's going to bless all the nations of the earth.

[9:05] And so forth. And Abram has a pretty logical question. Well how can that be when I don't even have a son? And it's interesting that the name Abram.

Means father of many. Isn't that something? And yet for the first 100 years of Abram's life. He was the father of none.

He had no son here. At this point. This is even before Ishmael. When Abraham kind of struck out on his own. Tried to make a son for himself. By going into his handmaid.

Hagar. And so. But at this point. He has no son whatsoever. And it's a pretty logical question. Here's Abram. He's the father of many. At least that's what his name means.

Can you imagine having that name. And for 100 years. Having to explain. That to me. You know the meaning of your name. You know the people are asking. What's your name? I'm Abram. Father of many. Oh really?

[10:02] You have many sons? No I don't have any sons. I don't even have any daughters. I mean. Really. That would be tough. Wouldn't it? And so. You know. It means father of many.

But he's the father of none. And yet God is establishing his covenant with him. Making a promise. And what. Let's go on and see what he says. And behold. The word of the Lord.

God spoke to him. The word of the Lord came to him. Saying. This one shall not be your heir. That is this man in his household. Member of his extended family. He will not be your heir.

But one who will come forth. Come from. Your own body. Shall be your heir. Then he brought him outside. And he said. Look now toward the heaven.

Count the stars. If you're able to number them. And he said to him. So shall your descendants be. Just. Just go ahead. Look up there in the sky.

[10:59] Abraham. Or Abram. Count them if you can. All those stars. Have you ever tried to count the stars? Go ahead and count them if you can. Of course God knows he can't count them.

He's making a point. That's how many. How many descendants. I'm going to bless you with. And yet. Abram is still the father of none. But.

It says in verse 6. He believed. In the Lord. And he. Accounted. That is God. Accounted it. To him. For righteousness. So what was the substance.

Of his faith. It was secured. In the word. Of God. Never mind. That he didn't have any sons. God had made a promise. And he believed God.

In fact. We can go a little bit further. Chapter 16. And look there. At verse 15. So. Hagar. Bore Abram a son.

[11:57] And Abram named his son. Whom Hagar bore. Ishmael. Abraham was 86 years old. When Hagar bore Ishmael. To Abraham. And so now he has a son.

But he's not the son of promise. It is the son that he. He had on his own. But not the son that God gave him. And now he's 86.

And he's still. As far as the covenant is concerned. He's the father of none. Well he's the father of one. But the promise is not through. That one. And then we go on into chapter 17.

When Abram was 99. We skipped a few years here. 99 years old. The Lord appeared to Abram. And said to him. I am almighty God. Walk before me.

And be blameless. And I will make my covenant. Between me and you. And will multiply you exceedingly. Not through Ishmael. So then. Through whom?

[12:55] Well. There was no son. No son. But. God's going to multiply him exceedingly. And then Abram fell on his face.

And God talked with him. Saying as for me. Behold. My covenant is with you. And you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram.

But your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you a father of many nations. So what did God do? Well he took Abram. Whose name.

Meant. Father of many. Changed his name. To a name that means father of multitudes. And yet he still doesn't have a son. At least not the right one yet.

And what did Abraham do? He believed him. Believed God. And it was accounted to him. For righteousness. And so number one. We just need to understand.

[13:53] What kind of faith this is. When the Bible speaks of salvation. By grace through faith. What. What is that faith?

Well number one. It's a faith that is secured in the word of God. We just take God's word for it. Number two. Not only a faith that is secured in the word of God.

But number two. His faith was strengthened. By the ways of God. The ways of God. And this is really very interesting. In chapter. Or verse 19.

Back there. In Romans chapter 4. The Bible says. Of not being weak. In faith. So. We know then. Abraham's faith. Was not a weak faith. It was a strong faith. That's the implication here. Very clearly. He did not consider his own body. Already dead. His body was already dead.

[14:50] Or as good as dead. Since he was about a hundred years old. And didn't have any children. And the deadness of Sarah's womb. And he has a wife also. She's about ninety. And she doesn't have any kids either. But the key.

Phrase here. Is not being weak. In faith. He's not weak in faith. In fact. It says a little bit later. That he was strong. Strengthened.

In faith. And the question is. What made his faith strong? Well. We have to look back.

At verse 17. To find the answer to that. And in reality. Abraham. Believed. Two things about God. That described. That. That. That really. Accounted for his. Strong faith. Two things about God.

Verse 17.

[15 : 49] Look at it. As it is written. I have made you a father of many nations. In the presence of him. Whom he believed. God. Who. And here's what I want you to see.

Who gives life. To the dead. And calls those things. Which do not exist. As though they did. And then. I think.

That. That's why we need to attach this. To what is said here. In verse 19. He considers his own body dead. Dead in the sense that. It was too late. Late. For him to have.

This. So called. Son of promise. Physically. He was just too late. I mean. It was a ridiculous notion. To think. That at a hundred years old. And his wife.

Ninety. That they. Could have a son. And so. It was like a deadness. Kind of a. A state. Of being dead. And so.

[16 : 44] That's why. I think. We can look back. At. Verse 17. And find the. Basis for. The strength of his faith. Because he believed. Two things about God. The things that are mentioned here.

In verse 17. He believed. That God. Can create. Something. Out of nothing. He can create something. Into existence.

That did not exist. Exist. And not only that. But God. Can also. Restore. Or revive. Things. That have ceased. To exist.

That have become dead. We could even. Use the word. Revive. Or even. Resurrect. That God. Can raise. The dead. Those are the two things.

He believed. About God. Now. Do we see those two things. Evident in Abraham's faith. Yes. We do. In the first place. Abraham believed. In a God.

[17 : 41] Who create. Who could create. Something. Out of nothing. God. Gave Abraham. We read it. A moment ago. God gave Abraham. A promise.

That he would be the father. Of many nations. He took him out there. And had him look up into the sky. Count the stars. That's how many. Descendants. I'm going to give you. God had promised that to him.

That his descendants. Would be as many. As the stars of the heaven. But Abraham. Was not the father of many. He was the father of none. That is when God gave him the promise. As a matter of fact.

It was 25 years. After God gave the promise. That he finally did have a son. You think you could have. Faith. That your faith. Would be strong enough. To wait on God. For 25 years. Most of us have a little problem.

Waiting a few days. Get an answer to prayer. You know. 25 years. Abraham was not the father of many. He was not even the father of one.

[18 : 40] Now. I mean. He was in a. As a matter of a technicality. But with Sarah. He was not a father of any. Then God restated his promise to Abraham.

And then changed his name. As we saw it a moment ago. Changed his name to Abraham. Father of multitudes. And still he's the father of none. And now he's 90 years old. And Sarah is.

Or 100 years old. Or 99 years old. And some odd months. And Sarah is 90 years old. Yet Abraham. The Bible says. Believed God. Even though all that was true. So.

You see. Here's the point. Abraham had no son. Yet he believed. God. Could create a son. Because he believed.

The promise. God had given him. That's the kind of faith he had. It was a strong faith. Because. It. It was a faith. In the. In the ways of God.

[19 : 35] The ability of God. The. The. The. The. Nature and character of God. He believed God. Could create a. A son. And the power of God.

The power of God. Can make. Then the father of none. Into the father of multitudes. See. He believed God for that. Second. Abraham believed in a God.

Who could raise. The dead. He believed that. When Isaac. Was born. And you know this story.

You know it well from scripture. When Isaac was born. God told Abraham. To do what to him. In essence.

To kill him. Put him to death. To offer him as a sacrifice. A. A blood sacrifice. To the Lord. Ordered him to kill him. And Abraham.

[20 : 33] Is going to do it. Right. Right. Without argument. We have nothing in scripture. That tells us that Abraham argued. With God about that.

God. And we might be thinking. In our minds. How could he do that? How could a father do that? I mean Abraham. Walked up that mount. Mountain. Side of Mount Moriah.

And up to the mountain. With his son Isaac. Isaac's carrying the wood. For the sacrifice. To burn it. Abraham has the knife.

Sharp and ready. And they get there. And Isaac is placed upon the altar. Abraham has drawn the sword.

He's about. To. Put to death. His own son. And he's going to do it. There isn't anything in scripture. That. That tells us that he hesitated.

[21 : 28] Or he debated about it. Or he was. He. You know. He was. Struggling with it. He was about to. Kill his own son. Because God had commanded. That he do so. And of course you know.

God stopped him. And you know. The rest of the story. And we want to know. How could he do that? Well simple. He believed God.

Believed him. He believed God. He believed. In a great God. And what did he believe. About God. At that point. Well.

Hebrews 11. 7. Tells us. Look at it. You're familiar with this passage as well. Hebrews chapter 11. And verse 7. By faith.

Verse 8. Excuse me. By faith Abraham. Obeyed. When he was called to go out to place. To the place which. He would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going.

[22 : 36] By faith. He dwelt in the land of the promise. As in. I'm in the wrong place. Okay. Where am I? Ah. 17. Did I say 17?

Did I? You weren't listening were you? Verse 17. By faith Abraham. Here we go. When he was tested. When he was tested. Offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises.

Offered up his only begotten son. Now that's a key phrase. What promise? That he would be the father of multitudes. And God gave him a son.

Isaac. He was the son of promise. And so. Here. He had received the promises. Offered up. He offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said.

In Isaac. Your seed shall be called. Concluding. And this is what he concluded. That God was able to do what? Raise him up. Even from the dead.

[23 : 36] From which he also received him. In a figurative sense. That is he did receive his son. In a figurative sense. He was raised from the dead. A figure of Christ.

But the point here. Is that Abraham believed these two things. About God. He believed very strongly. He believed that God could create. Something out of nothing. He had no son. He believed God could create a son for him.

Because God had promised. He would be the father of multitudes. He also believed that God could raise. From the dead. And he would sacrifice his only son.

And would have killed him. And just believed. That if he had. That God would raise him from the dead. This is Abraham's faith. Third.

His faith. Was surrendered. To the work of God. We can look at these very quickly. Verse 19. Another. Aspect of this verse.

[24 : 34] And not being weak in faith. He did not consider. Consider his own body. Although.

Already dead. Or. In a state. Of being dead. Since he was about a hundred years old. And the deadness of Sarah's. Sarah's womb.

Now what's the point here? Abraham. Abraham. Believed God. His faith. Was in God. And Abraham. Had surrendered.

Himself. To God. Lock, stock, and barrel. If it was going to get done. God was going to have to do it. Because Abraham.

Could not place any faith. In himself. Because. He was in a state of deadness. That is in the. In the. The sense.

[25 : 31] In reference to. Having children. Who could be. Sons and daughters. Of the promise. And that. There could be. Descendants. That would number. As many. Stars in the sky.

He was absolutely. In. Unable. He was. In a. Very literal sense. Physical sense. Apparently. Impotent. But he was that.

In a spiritual sense too. God had made a promise. And Abraham. Could not bring that promise about. He had to surrender. That's what his faith was. It was surrender. Total surrender.

To the work of God. I think we could. See. Implied. That Abraham. Tried to do that work. On his own. In having.

His son. Ishmael. Caused a lot of trouble. Since. Actually. And God said. He's not. He's not the one. Why. Why. Well.

[26 : 29] Because God's plan. Was for Isaac. But also. God is saying. He's not the one. Because you did that. I didn't. And faith.

Surrenders. Totally. To the work of God. To his work. Number four. And finally. His faith. Was steadfast.

In the will of God. Verse 20. He did not waver. That's where I get the word steadfast. He did not waver. He wasn't on and off.

And on and off. On and then off again. He never wavered. Didn't vacillate. In his faith. It was steadfast. In the will of God.

He did not waver. At the promise of God. Through unbelief. I tell you. He certainly didn't. If you and I. Had been asked.

[27 : 27] To take our. Only son. Up to the top. Of some mountain. And kill him. I think our faith. Would waver a little bit. Abraham's did not waver. Did not waver.

At the promise of God. It was strengthened. In faith. Giving glory to God. And being fully convinced. Or fully persuaded. That what. God had promised.

He was also. Able to perform. That's what faith is. Faith. Is steadfast. In the will. Of God. Now let's just kind of.

Recap this. Take it away. From the illustration. Of Abraham. And apply it. To saving faith. Saving faith. Is something.

That is secured. In the word of God. That is. You and I. Are saved. Because we believe. God's word. We believe the gospel.

[28 : 23] For us. The word of God. Is the gospel. It's the good news. Of Jesus Christ. It's secured. Not by our own reasoning. Our own understanding. Our own. Contrived. Gospel.

Of some sort. Or some way. That we might. Please God. Or honor God. Or be able to be. Accepted by God. Our saving faith. Is secured. By the word of God. That's why.

When we. Go out to. Witness. Like brother Jim. Mentioning a moment ago. What was he doing with? Not his own opinions. About things. And his own. Kind of rationalism.

But the word of God. We have nothing else. To share. But God's word. And faith. Responds. To the truth. Of that word. Secured. In the word of God. Number two. Saving faith.

Just like Abraham. Is strengthened. By. The ways of God. For us. Salvation. Is the creative work. Of God. Isn't it? We're created.

[29 : 19] In Christ Jesus. The Bible says. It's also. For us. Salvation. Is. God raising. The dead. Isn't it? A new life.

Raised. To walk. In. In. In. The newness. Of life. Faith. Saving faith. Third. Third. Is. Is. Surrendered. To the work. Of God.

The work. Of God. For by grace. You have been saved. Through faith. And that. Not of yourselves. Not of your works. It is the. Gift of God. Not of. Works.

Lest any. One. Should boast. For we. Are. His. His. Workmanship. Created. In Christ Jesus. Under good works.

[30 : 17] And we could go on from there. You see. That's what saving faith is. It's. It's a surrender to the work of God. Not our work. Or our abilities. Or even our desire.

To. To clean up our lives. And to get on track. Or do righteous things. It's the work of God. And then finally. Saving faith. Is. Steadfast. In the will of God.

Steadfast. In the will of God. John. 1. 12. And 13. But as many as received him. To them he gave the right. To become children of God.

To those. Who believe in his name. Who were born. Not of blood. Nor of the will of flesh. Nor of the will of man. But born of. God.

God. And then Galatians 3. 22. That the promise. The promise. By faith in Jesus Christ. Might be given.

[31:14] To those who. Believe. Believe. That's saving faith. As explained. Or demonstrated. By the kind of faith. That Abraham had.

And God said. Of his faith. He said. There in verse 22. We just. Finish this off. And therefore. It was accounted to him. For righteousness. Therefore. Therefore. The faith. That Abraham had. As. Paul. Described it. Thank you.