

**Title:** The Transcendent Power of Faith

**Scripture:** Romans 4:9-16

**Series:** God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

- a. The Apostle Paul had been so transformed by the doctrine of justification by faith that he joyously continues to expound on its importance in this Epistle.
- b. In our last sermon, Paul appealed to the Jewish patriarch Abraham as proof that there is only one way to be divinely redeemed: through Sola Fide, faith alone in Christ alone.
- c. Paul argued that before Abraham had done any works of the Law, before he had offered Isaac on the altar, and even before he was circumcised, God counted him as righteous because Abraham believed, through faith, in the promise of salvation through the coming Messiah.
  - i. God's promise to Abraham preached the Gospel of salvation. This is made clear by **Galatians 3:8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."
  - ii. So when God promised Abraham the patriarchy of the family of faith, Abraham understood that this could only be accomplished by divine substitution for sin.
    1. In other words, Abraham saw the coming of Jesus Christ and understood that Christ

would atone for his sins and the sins of the nations.

- d. This is critically important for us to understand. Before circumcision in Genesis 17, before Isaac is born in Genesis 21, and before the command for Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice in Genesis 22, the promise that the nations (both Jews and Gentiles) would come to the family of faith in Genesis 12 and the certain promise given to Abraham in Genesis 15, taught that faith superseded works. Paul has taught us this truth in **Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
- i. Therefore, any thought that Law, works, or ceremony could save was and continues to be ludicrous. Paul’s point is that redemption is of promise and must be received by faith alone. We can never earn redemption.
    1. Inherit in the Gospel is man’s inability to save himself. Man’s sinfulness requires the righteousness of another. Man must bow to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
  - ii. This will be the sum of Paul’s argument in our sermon today. Faith in Christ transcends every culture, the Law, and everything else.

2. Verses 9-12: Faith Transcends Culture: Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the

uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. (10) How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. (11) He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, (12) and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

- a. Paul now asks, **“Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.”**
  - i. This question continues to be of vital importance, even today. Our verse asks, is the gospel limited to the Jews only, or has God, in his infinite mercy and grace, also opened the door for the Gentile nations?
- b. Paul answers the question in favor of the doctrine of Sola Fide for all nations. Paul’s answer teaches us that Abraham was counted as righteous at least one year before the birth of Issac, fourteen years before either of them was circumcised, and between 5-43 years before the sacrifice of Isaac.
  - i. The Point is that Abraham was declared righteous while he was a Gentile (there were no Jews) and remained one until he was circumcised as a Jew.

Works or the Law did not justify Abraham because the law still did not exist. Abraham, like all sinners, was saved by sheer grace!

- ii. Therefore Faith Alone was a gentile principle long before it was a Jewish reality.
- iii. In other words, Paul teaches that faith alone is for everyone, Jew and Gentile! **Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness, that he had, by faith...**

1. The blessedness which David spoke of is not for Jews only because Abraham received it as a gentile by faith.

a. Do you remember what David said in **Psalm 32:1-2** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

i. Salvation includes the blessedness of peace with God. What a wonderful truth we have. If we come to repentance by faith in Christ alone, we can know that all our sins are forgiven.

2. The promise of forgiveness was never tied to law-keeping, works, or the Old Testament sign of the covenant; circumcision.

- iv. Therefore, according to God's word, Abraham is the father of the uncircumcised and circumcised believers, not on the grounds of circumcision but

of faith. Through the oneness of faith in Jesus Christ, Jews, and Gentiles are brothers and sisters.

1. Paul expands on this thought in **Ephesians 2:12-14** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
- v. Paul explains that circumcision was always meant to be a sign and seal for both groups, as true circumcision is inwardly and not outwardly.
  1. **Romans 2:28-29** For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
- vi. This inward circumcision unifies all true believers under the banner of Jesus Christ.
  1. **Colossians 2:11** In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

- c. Beloved, what great news we hear in Romans. As presented in the Gospel, the doctrine of Justification by faith transcends all cultures. The Gospel is for everyone.
- i. Consider the words of Paul in **Galatians 3:26-29** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.
  - ii. The reality of the oneness found in Christ for both Jew and Gentile will be experienced by all the saints at the consummation of the ages. We read about this in **Revelation 5:9-10** And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, (10) and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”
- d. Do you see it, beloved? Jesus is not the savior of one particular culture. Jesus is not for the white man, black man, brown man, red man, or yellow man! Jesus is the answer for every man, and these false walls of separation are torn down only in Him.

3. Verses 13-15: Faith Transcends the Law: For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (14) For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null, and the promise is void. (15) For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, there is no transgression.
- a. If circumcision and its many blessings had nothing to do with Abraham's justification, then the Law had even less to do with it. Paul explains in verse 13, **“The promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.”**
  - b. Historically, the law came many years after Abraham was made heir of the promise of faith. Therefore, the Law could not invalidate justification by grace through faith alone. The law could not replace what had already been established; grace.
    - i. **Galatians 3:17-18** This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (18) For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.
      1. No matter how much modern man squirms and fights this truth, the fact is that God justified Abraham by grace before any supposed law-keeping. This cannot be undone. Genesis 15 demonstrates the reality

that Salvation is a gift of God through Jesus Christ.

- c. Therefore, pursuing righteousness both by the Law and by faith is impossible. It is an either/or proposition. **For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. (15) For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.**
  - i. In other words, living by the Law in hopes of redemption nullifies the gospel's promise by grace. Endeavoring, by human means, to earn salvation is futile. Our sin is too deep, and our nature too corrupted.
  - ii. Beloved, hear what the Scriptures are saying. You can never earn salvation. No work that you can do can remove the filthiness of your sin. You are not a good person earning your way to heaven. Salvation is for those who admit their sinfulness and inability and cast themselves on the completed work of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!
- d. Paul argues that the Law reveals the true need of the soul. It reveals our transgression and warns us of God's coming wrath. The Law enhances our sense of sinfulness and makes apparent our guilt.
  - i. Therefore, the Law promotes defeat and desperation, but faith brings joy, assurance of the promise, and a life of victory.
- e. Don't be fooled, says Paul, "The principle of faith transcends the Law." Abraham was counted as

righteous because of his faith. Sola Fide preceded the Jews; it preceded the Law; it is for everyone!

- f. We must remember that the only proper heir of God the Father is God the Son. God the Son alone is worthy to inherit the kingdom that His Father promised, but through the gift of grace and through that righteousness that is by faith, those adopted into the family of God become His heirs also.
  - i. So Paul's argument is simple. The promise of God to Abraham and his seed has no value apart from faith.
- g. What about those who think justification comes through the works of the Law rather than faith alone? Paul warns those individuals. **The Law brings death.** The law cannot save, justify, or forgive anyone. The law pronounces us guilty of sinning against God and justly sentences the sinner to eternal death.
  - i. Beloved, if we seek to base our salvation on our merit, the only thing we will ever merit is God's wrath.
- h. When we sin, we do not just sin against God's norms. We sin against the one who gives us His law. We do violence to God, to the author of our very life.
  - i. That is why sin is such an egregious matter in God's sight.
- i. Knowing all this, we must admit that the Law's purpose is to show us our need for the Savior. The Law condemns us as vile sinners who will justly be condemned if we do not repent. God's Grace transcends the righteous requirement of the law and

offers us undeserved grace through faith in Christ alone.

4. Verse 16: Faith Transcends All: That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,
  - a. The universal principle of grace has taught us that salvation comes by faith alone. Oh, how badly our sin-torn world needs to know this!
  - b. We need to understand just how radically sinful we are—how sin so affects every part of us that we cannot live up to God’s standards and affect our salvation—that we are lost in sins.
  - c. We must understand that we need foreign and radical righteousness that proceeds through faith alone.
    - i. **Romans 1:17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
    - ii. **Romans 3:22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
    - iii. **Philippians 3:9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—
    - iv. **Titus 3:5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his

own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

- d. Beloved, it was sola fide for Abraham, sola fide for Dauid, sola fide for Jews, sola fide for Gentiles, sola fide before, during, and after the Law, and it will always be sola fide. Sola fide transcends everything.
- e. Finally, our passage ends with a purpose clause that gives us a reason. Why is it by faith? “It is of faith that it might be according to Grace.”
  - i. Salvation must be by grace. It must be a free gift that could never be earned. Salvation must be received!
- f. The apostle says that justification is by faith so that it might be of grace so that all the seed of Abraham—all those who come after him and follow in his way—may assuredly proclaim the words found in **Galatians 2:19-21** For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.
- g. Beloved, Abraham is not simply the father of Isaac and his progeny or the father of the Jews, but he is also the father of the Gentiles who trust in the same promise that he embraced by which he was counted righteous before God.
  - i. **Galatians 3:6-7** just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? (7)

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

5. Benediction

- a. **Galatians 2:21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

**Public Reading of Scripture**  
**Galatians 2:15-21**