

Intro:

Last week we looked at the faith of Abraham in a message called “Abraham’s Faith Described”. There are two key points we need to recover from that message so that we can understand fully the impact of the message and passage for today.

1. Material reality did not weaken his faith (19)
2. Divine promise strengthened his faith (20)

On the one hand, reality said:

- Abraham is too old to have a son and
- Sarah is beyond too old to have a son.

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE LEARN
that reality speaks of death, not life.

On the other hand, the promise said:

- Abraham and Sarah will have a son at this time next year
- Abraham’s faith in the promise was strengthened to act immediately in obedience to God’s commands, though the promise was not yet seen

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE LEARN
that from the Divine Word springs life.

Let’s put it another way: What Abraham did was believe God’s impossible words without any external evidence that they were true other than that it was God who said it.

The apostle Paul concludes this section by saying that it was this strengthening faith that God credited to Abraham as righteousness (23).

Now I want you to hold on to these points from our last message because I once again want to compare them to the thing that God calls all men everywhere to believe for forgiveness of sins and hope of heaven.

We have been making that comparison throughout our look at Abraham in Romans 4, but today we are going to see the apostle make the comparison directly in the closing verses of the chapter.

Read Rm 4.23-25, text 23-24

Our title:

Our Faith Compared

Proposition: Our New Testament Christian faith answers exactly to Abraham's Old Testament saving faith: his justification assures our justification if we believe.

I. A parallel record (23-24a)

A. The ultimate purpose of Old Testament revelation

1. What it is not
 - a. Not just a 'prequel' to the New Testament
 - b. Not just the foundation of the New Testament [although this is true]
2. What it is for
 - a. It is for our example, that we might learn from the behaviour of ancient people
 - b. If is for our profit, that we might understand the meaning of eternal doctrine

B. The scriptural confirmation of the OT purpose

1. Ps 102.18
2. Rm 15.4
3. 1 Cor 9.9-10
4. 1 Cor 10.6, 11
5. 2 Tim 3.16-17

C. The parallel blessing of the OT record for believing people "not for him only, but for us"

1. Abraham's experience is laid out for us in this chapter so that we can understand justification by faith alone – the imputation of righteousness from God to sinners

"Abraham was a representative person."¹

2. Abraham's experience was recorded long after he lived – 'not for his sake was it written'
 - a. This means Genesis, not Romans!
 - b. That which 'was written' is this word 'it was imputed to him' [Gen 15.6]

¹ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 124.

- c. This word is not written for his sake ... but for us also (24a)
 - 1) The word was also written for the sake of generations of Abraham's descendants – but they are not in view here
 - 2) The word was also written for any Gentile before Christ who heard of Abraham's people and desired the faith of Abraham — but such people are not in view here
 - 3) The word was written 'for us also'

The OT record is intended to provide a parallel to the NT record.

The OT faith of Abraham is a lived out parallel to NT faith in Christ.

II. An identical reckoning (24b)

- A. The reckoning to Abraham in the past [fully analyzed in this chapter]

Quote used last two weeks in introduction: "Paul cites only the words 'it was reckoned to him' from Gen 15.6 in v. 23, perhaps as a 'shorthand' allusion to the verse, or perhaps because all along it has been Paul's concern to unfold the meaning of that 'reckoning.' It is *faith* that is 'reckoned': a faith that is *apart from works, apart from circumcision, apart from the law, apart from sight* — and therefore a 'reckoning' that is solely a matter of *grace*."²

- 1. Faith is reckoned as righteousness apart from works (see v. 4 esp.)
 - 2. Faith is reckoned as righteousness apart from circumcision (see v. 10)
 - 3. Faith is reckoned as righteousness apart from the law (13)
 - 4. Faith is reckoned as righteousness apart from sight (17)
- B. The reckoning to us 'it shall be imputed'
 - 1. A note on structure and vocabulary
 - a. The word of reckoning (imputation) is not written for him only (for Abraham only)

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 287

b. But also for us

1) To whom – parallel with the ‘to him’ of v. 23

a) It was reckoned to him

b) ... to the ones about to be reckoned (v. 24, literal)

Please notice here that Paul is putting Abraham and NT saints in an exact parallel: to him || to the ones [to whom]

2) Unusual word: ‘about to be’

2. The sense of the passage

a. The original statement was made to Abraham (Gen 15.6)

b. The original statement was recorded by Moses

c. The original statement is for the benefit of those ‘about to be reckoned’

1) From the standpoint of Abraham and Moses: these people are to receive the same benefit in the future

2) From the standpoint of the lost sinner: just prior to believing, he is the one to whom it is about to be reckoned

3) From the standpoint of believing but not seeing

a) I am believing (and according to the Bible I am justified – my faith is reckoned to me (imputed to me) as righteousness

b) I don’t actually see that happening: I am only receiving God’s promise, *just like Abraham did*

d. So my faith is reckoned as righteousness to me

1) Apart from works

2) Apart from circumcision (ritual)

3) Apart from the law

4) Apart from my seeing it as a reality

But I am about to be reckoned... one day, I will see with my eyes that what God promised and I believed is true: I will see my Redeemer and stand in his presence.

*Just like Abraham – reckoned to him, reckoned to me,
and about to be seen by me!*

God has given us a parallel record, and an identical reckoning because Abraham and us share one more thing...

III. A common root (24c)

- A. The root of Abraham's faith: Abraham believed in him who gives life from the dead (17)
 - 1. He believed in something he could not see (Heb 11.8-12)
 - 2. He abandoned the things he could see (Heb 11.13-16)
 - 3. He believed [later] that God could raise even Isaac from the dead (Heb 11.17-19)
- B. The root of our faith: we believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (24c)
 - 1. Belief in life from the death is the root of saving faith
 - 2. Belief in a specific life from the death is the object of saving faith [Jesus]
 - 3. Belief in our life from the death is the fruit of our saving faith

Conclusion:

Do you believe in, are you resting in, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as your only hope of salvation?

^{KJV} **Rm 10.9** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

- You cannot have saving faith if you are depending on some ritual to save you. [A ritual is something you do; it's not something God does.]
- You cannot have saving faith if you are depending on being nice to save you. [Being nice is something you do (a law); it's not something God does.]
- You cannot have saving faith if you are depending on being able to prove that God exists, that the Bible is true, that it all makes rational sense to the mind – all of that is something you do, not something God does.

Saving faith believes in him who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead.