

**Welcome - (~3 min)**

- Notes:

Opening prayer – (~1 min)**Opening Comments – (~5 min)**

- Paul was writing to the new Christians who were still dealing with all the laws, rituals, and outward signs of faith they had in their heritage.
- Paul knew that looking to Abraham as one life-long example would help bring faith and righteousness into focus.
- He must have sensed that these new believers were wrestling with the idea of not having to DO anything.
- Rather all that was required was to believe, have faith, and they would be considered righteous.
- It must have seemed too simple for them, just as it seems too simple to many in our day.
- Paul begins with Abraham which allows him to deal with a second topic, that of circumcision.
- Paul was using the Old Testament to bring light to their new found Christian faith and lifestyle changes.
- He uses an excellent example of classical reasoning for his discussion of faith and righteousness.
- He shares a very important statement in 4:5B, "*However, to the man [person] who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*" Paul was speaking of anyone who does this!
- What exactly is *faith*? There have been many attempts to define faith, some of them misleading.
- The faith Paul is talking about is biblical faith. Here are some good examples of biblical faith:
- John Calvin: "We shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."¹
- Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, And that He will do what He has promised to do, and then to expect this of Him."²
- D. M. Loyd-Jones: "Most theologians and Bible teachers divide faith into three elements: "knowledge, belief, and trust" or "awareness, assent, and commitment"³ or some variation of those ideas.
- Dr. James Montgomery Boice: "But, in nearly every case, the point with which they begin is "knowledge of the truth" or what I call "content". Faith without content is no true faith at all."⁴
- In addition to the quotes above, other scholars have defined the three elements of faith as: Content, Assent, and Commitment all can be linked to the previous stated elements of faith.
- So as we go through our study lesson, look for these three elements of Abraham's faith: 1) Knowledge/Content; 2) Belief/Assent; and 3) Trust/Commitment.

Discussion of the Study Lesson – (~41 min)

(Start time: _____) **This week's Aim: *The Gospel's Power To Save the Lost: "By Faith Alone"***

Topic for Day 1: Overview - 4:1-25

1. Read Romans 4:1-25 and take some notes that interest you.
- Listen to what has interested people as they read chapter 4.

Paul's Letter To The Romans

2. (+2 min) What are some key words you noticed in this passage?

- Just ask for a few keywords (i.e., righteous(ness), credit(ed), faith, believe(d), promise(d), grace)

3. (+2 min) What is something you learned about Abraham in this cursory read?

- Once again, just listen to a few comments that people learned about Abraham

(+ 2 min) **Application 1:** What will you apply to your life this week from the sermon you heard Sunday?

- This is a good question to see if people are listening to the sermon
- You might recommend (again) they take notes, it helps remember what is said, it also helps with this question on the first day - each week this will be asked.

Topic for Day 2: Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. - 4:1-8

1. (+2 min) What do you learn about Abraham's faith in these verses:

- Genesis: 12:1-9 - he left his home (in Ur - now Iraq) in faith(1-5), he built an altar to God in Shechem and between Bethel and Ai (6-9);
- 15:6-18 - he believed the Lord (6); Abram questioned God (8), God answered Abram's question by making a covenant with him (9-21)
- 17:1-10 - Abram (means "father of many" literally "father of a people") at 99 yrs. of age, fell face down before God; God changes his name to Abraham (translated colloquially, means "father of a vast, vast many," literally "father of a nation"); the introduction of circumcision.
- 17:23 - Abraham circumcised his son Ishmael and every male in his household
- 18:6-14 - God visited Abraham in Mamre, three men, Abraham believed them. Sarah laughed
- 21:1-6 - Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham at the very time God had promised (2); Abraham was 100 years old.

2. (+8 min) What were some of the promises God made to Abram/Abraham in the references above?

God promised Abram the land the Canaanites lived in (Gen. 12:7)

- 12:1-3, 7: contain 7 "I will's" from God:
 1. "I will show you [a land]."
 2. "I will make you into a great nation"
 3. "I will bless you"
 4. "I will make your name great"
 5. "I will bless those who bless you"
 6. "I will curse [those who curse you]" and later, after Abraham had reached Canaan,
 7. "I will give [you] this land."

3. (+2 min) Do you think verses 7-8 could be used to help someone wrestling with guilt? Explain:

- Listen to their answers

(+1 min) **Application 2:** How might today's study change the way you think about your standing with God? How might you share this with others today?

- Listen to their answers - a personal question so you might remind folks of confidentiality
- Try to find someone who will share "how they shared with others"

Topic for Day 3: God's promise comes by faith. - 4:9-17

1. (+2 min) What were the three questions Paul states in vss. 9-10 and the resulting answers in vss. 9-12?
 1. Is the blessedness Paul speaks of for circumcised or uncircumcised?
 2. Under what circumstances was it [righteousness] credited?
 3. Was it after he [Abraham] was circumcised or before?
 - The end of verse 10 is the answer, "It was not after, but before!"
 - Paul makes his point now: "So then, he [Abraham] was the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them."
 - There must have been some division in the church at Rome and possibly some of the Messianic Jews were holding on to their traditions and expecting Gentiles to follow suit.

 2. (+1 min) What does vs. 11 say circumcision is? What does that verse say righteousness is?
 - Circumcision = an outward sign
 - Righteousness = being sealed by faith

 3. (+1 min) Who was Abraham the father of according to vs. 11?
 - "he [Abraham] is the father of all who believe [both circumcised and uncircumcised *implied*]"

 4. (+1 min) What is the condition stated in vs. 12 for one to have Abraham as a father?
 - One must "walk in the footsteps of the faith father Abraham had"
 - Paul is demonstrating that circumcision had nothing to do with Abraham being credited righteous, it was by faith!

 5. (+1 min) How does the promise come according to vs. 16?
 - You've probably heard this before but when you see the word "therefore" you need to understand what it is there for.
 - "Therefore [in other words, Paul is saying, take everything I've been saying and wrap it up in this statement] **the promise comes by faith** so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring [Gentiles and Jews by spiritual association through believing]"
- (+2 min) **Application 3:** Identify things you do that outwardly demonstrate you've been declared righteous:
- Personal sharing is good

Topic for Day 4: Abraham demonstrated his faith in God's promise through his approach to life. - 4:18-22

1. (+2 min) Why does Paul use "*against all hope*" in vs. 18?
 - Abraham believed - What a wonderful faith he had and it can be ours too!
 - Abraham knew his circumstances, he was old (99 years) and Sarah was well past child bearing years!
 - **Read 4:19** to group - Wonderful words *without weakening in his faith* - God had said it so Abraham believed it - period!
 - A key we can learn from Abraham's faith is that he didn't pay attention to the circumstances around him
 - He put confidence in the promise God gave because of the One who gave it.
 - All he did was **believe God!** That's it isn't it, that's what the gospel requires!

Paul's Letter To The Romans

2. (+2 min) What is something that causes one to waver (vs. 20)?

- "unbelief" is identified by Paul as to something which causes people to waver

3. (+1 min) Of what was Abraham fully persuaded (vs. 21)?

- "*fully persuaded*" means filled to the brim - there was no room in Abraham's faith for doubt!
- Have you ever been *fully persuaded* regarding God's promises?

4. (+1 min) Why was Abraham's righteousness credited to him (vs. 20-22)?

- He was declared *righteous* because he was *fully persuaded* that God had the power to do what He had promised (vs. 21-22).

(+1 min) **Application 4:** How persuaded are you of God's power to keep His promises? Will you share your persuasion with someone today?

- Listen for opportunities to encourage people in your group by what others say

Topic for Day 5: God's provision, Jesus' accomplishment, and the believers faith leads to justification. - 4:23-25

1. (+2 min) Who does Paul say the words, "*it was credited to him*" are for?

- "*not for him alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness...*"

2. (+1 min) What is the condition for righteousness to be credited to someone according to Paul in vs. 24?

- "*for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.*"
- We must believe in God as Abraham did - He is to be the object of our faith!

3. (+1 min) What did Jesus do for us (vs. 25)?

- "*He died for our sins and was raised to life for our justification*"
- True faith is believing in the death of Jesus Christ **and** in His resurrection.
- God *justifies* those who believe in the death and resurrection of Christ
- We all need to be *fully persuaded* of that and remember the price it cost!

(+2 min) **Application 5:** In verse 24 Paul describes the object of our faith is to be God. What is the object of your faith? How will you demonstrate your faith to others today?

- Ask for volunteers on this one - it is very personal - its true purpose was to get people to thinking.

(+2 min)

Closing Comments – (~9 min)

- After going through this chapter we may need to look a little more at biblical faith and what it represents.
- Typically when we think of faith, we think in subjective terms. That is, we think of our feelings about something, which really means that we are person-centered in this area rather than God-centered.
- Faith is simple, but often times it is the simplicity which makes it difficult to understand.
- We have already stated, from multiple theologians/scholars, that faith contains three elements: knowledge/content, belief, and trust

- Why these three elements? Our faith is **not** some wishful thinking about something that is mystical or magical.
- Rather from reading Chapter 4, we see there are the three elements of faith, so what does each element represent:
- **Knowledge/Content:** knowledge is the beginning of faith, the knowledge that something has **content**.
- The object of our faith is to be Christ; and faith rests upon knowledge, not upon feelings, opinions, or pious ignorance.
- Paul has indicated that our faith must be in Christ and His works, not ourselves or faith itself.
- Then after knowledge is recognized and taken in, comes the second element of faith and that is belief and/or assent.
- **Belief/Assent:** it is possible for a person to know the *content* and *believe*, yet without the *content* or *belief* becoming personal.
- For instance, **James 2:19** says *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder."*
- So we see from this statement by James that even the demons "believe" but "shudder."
- Both mind and heart are involved in biblical faith as well as belief.
- Here is an example of what this means by the conversion of John Wesley in May 1738.
- "Wesley was at Aldersgate Street in London where someone was reading Luther's "Preface" to the Epistle to the Romans. As Wesley tells it, "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation. And an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."⁵
- Both mind and heart are involved in biblical faith. When the truth of the mind (knowledge and content) takes root in the heart (belief and assent), the believer is able to stand firm against temptations which are sure to come.
- **Trust/Commitment:** This is the third element of biblical faith. *Trust and/or commitment* biblically is completely yielding oneself to Christ, a commitment which goes beyond knowledge, content, belief, and assent.
- Biblical *trust and commitment* is when a person passes over the threshold of belonging to oneself, to belonging completely to the Lord and having a complete reliance on the Him.
- A biblical example of this kind of trust is seen in **John 20:26-28** with Thomas, *"A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*
- Paul is stressing the need for faith and has given Abraham as an example from Genesis.
- We will close with these wonderful words from Martin Luther about faith:
- "What could be more irrational and laughable, ridiculous, and impossible, than God's words to Abraham?... Moreover, all the articles of our Christian belief are, when considered rationally, just as impossible and mendacious and preposterous. Faith, however, is completely abreast of the situation. It grips reason by the throat and strangles the beast. It effects what the whole world and all that is in it is impotent to do. But how can faith do this? By holding on to God's word and by accounting it right and true, however stupid and impossible it may appear. By this means did Abraham imprison his reason... And in the same fashion do all other believers who have entered the dark recesses of faith throttle reason, saying: Listen, Reason, thou blind and stupid fool that understandest not of the things of God.

Paul's Letter To The Romans

Cease thy tricks and chattering; hold thy tongue and be still! Venture no more to criticize the Word of God. Sit thee down: listen to his words; and believe in him. So do the faithful... achieve what the whole world is incompetent to achieve. And thereby they do our Lord God supreme and noble service."⁶

Closing Prayers – (~1 min)

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 551.

² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *All of Grace*, (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 47.

³ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25, Atonement and Justification*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 45.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 1, Justification by Faith (Romans 1-4)*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1991), p. 389.

⁵ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1, pg. 103.

⁶ See reference for manuscript in footnote 4 above. This quote is on pp. 481-482.