

ADULT UNIT III: Standing in the Faith
ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Reckoned as Righteous
ADULT TOPIC: For Our Sake

LESSON 11
DATE: May 12, 2024

DEVOTIONAL READING: Genesis 15:1-6
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 4
PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 4:13-25

Home Daily Bible Reading

May 6	M	Matthew 20:1-16	God Is Generous to the Unworthy
May 7	T	Genesis 13:14-18	A Great and Blessed Nation
May 8	W	Genesis 15:1-6	A Promise of Countless Heirs
May 9	Th	1 John 2:12-17	Little Children, Your Sins Are Forgiven
May 10	F	Psalms 32	God's Abundant Forgiveness
May 11	Sa	Romans 4:1-12	Trust God, Who Justified the Ungodly
May 12	Su	Romans 4:13-25	Christ Was Raised for Our Justification

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “Jesus Paid It All” - #262 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Romans 4:13-25 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

God's Promise Realized through Faith

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants 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, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ Hoping against hope, he believed

that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So shall your descendants be.”¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.²⁰ No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹ being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²² Therefore “it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”²³ Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone²⁴ but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,²⁵ who was handed over for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Affirmation – Help us to grow stronger in our faith, Lord. (*Spoken together by class and teacher.*)

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

The promise Paul refers to here is the blessing of Genesis 12:1-3, where God promises to make Abraham into a great nation, to bless him, and eventually to bless the entire world through him.

Paul is writing to a mixed Jew-Gentile church in Rome, and thus, he had to address the question of what defines God’s people, particularly, since Jews had been identifying themselves as God’s people by adherence to the law of Moses and in using outward identifiers (diet, dress, lifestyle) for centuries.



The gist of Paul’s argument is that Gentiles (and Jews) do not need to submit to a checklist of diet, dress, or calendar to be or show themselves to be God’s

people—even God’s true people descended from Abraham (see also 1 Samuel 16:7). Their lived-out faith in God in a broken world is sign and difference enough (1 Peter 3:15).

This passage echoes many of the same themes we find in Hebrews 11:8-18: Abraham’s faith was grounded on who God is, not on merit or his own resources.

Revisiting an earlier argument (see Romans 3:20), Paul reminds the church that the Mosaic law was instituted to identify sin, not to resolve the spiritual exile and judgment sin brings (4:15).

Paul’s goal for the church has always been unity, since infighting does not reflect God, nor does it move the Kingdom mission forward. He accomplishes this by starting both Jews and Gentiles on the same footing in the past (sin; see 3:9) and with the same basis for relationship with God now (faith, not law; see 4:16). See also John 17:11; Ephesians 4:1-6.



Break into small groups. Think about and discuss the following questions:

1) Adults like to hear about heroes from the past. Discuss some heroes who have made a difference in your life, your church and/or society. 2) Adults wonder if the promises others make to them will be fulfilled. Has anyone ever made a promise to you that was not fulfilled. 3) Adults increase in their desire to share the story of Abraham’s righteousness as described by Paul. Recount Abraham’s story of righteousness. How does it resonate with you?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

The Promise and the Law (Romans 4:13): This chapter is a continuation of Paul’s discussion on justification by faith by versus works of the law. Paul says that since justification is by faith, then no one can boast about obtaining that justification by works of the law. Furthermore, he states that it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring would receive the promise that

he would be heir to the world (v. 13a). Paul emphasizes the fact that the promise to Abraham precedes the law, yet, the promise was the foundation of the law. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, p. 315)

Since all God's relations with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob occurred prior to the giving of the Law of Moses, we cannot say they were based on the law. Instead, they were based on God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness through faith. (<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-4>. Cited November 19, 2023)

The Law Does Not Save (Romans 4:14-15): Try as we might, there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. No amount of work will guarantee us a spot in the Kingdom. God made a promise to save the ungodly, and salvation from God is the only way. If law is the basis of our salvation, then our salvation depends on our performance in keeping the law—and no one can keep the law good enough to be saved by it. A law-promise of salvation can never be sure. (<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/romans-4>. Cited November 19, 2023)

The law could define sin's specific contours and clarify what effects it has, but it cannot save. In fact, sin brings wrath and provokes God's anger when humans break His law. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, p. 316)

The Promise Comes by Faith (Romans 4:16-22): Two important points of note here: God's salvation is for all who are willing to receive salvation by faith; and the promise to bless the world is offered to all who are willing to emulate Abraham's trust in God.

Paul notes the story of Abraham told in Genesis 17:5, where it is promised that he will be the father of many nations. Paul goes on to speak of "God who gives life to the dead." Remember the promise made to Abraham and Sarah? They were past the age of childbearing, possibly thinking that their efforts to bear children were "dead," but God promised them that they would have a child, even in their old age.

To hope is to wait with expectation for something to occur. For Abraham to hope against hope meant he had no reason to believe that he and Sarah would conceive a child. According to Genesis 17:17, Sarah was even postmenopausal. This childbirth would be nothing short of a miracle. Paul makes no mention of the "help" provided to God, when Hagar is offered to Abraham as a "surrogate" mother. He merely focuses on Abraham's acceptance of God's trustworthiness. Paul notes that God credits Abraham with righteousness—not because he had done good deeds or even avoided evil, but because he had staked his and his

family's future on the promises of God. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, pgs. 316-318)

The Price of Justification (Romans 4:23-25): Paul notes that the same righteousness credited to Abraham was not just for Abraham. It would be extended to his offspring because God promised he would be the father of many nations. Paul notes that those of us who believe that Jesus was raised from the dead will also be credited as righteous. There is no indication of when this will occur; but we are considered part of God's kingdom (Romans 8:22-25). Paul describes the actions of a true Messiah, One who died on our behalf. Jesus paid it all. His death was a necessary price paid for the redemption of our sins. The price He paid was necessary for our justification. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, pgs. 318-319)

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Discuss the following questions:

- 1) Summarize the Abram/Abraham story as recorded in Genesis 17. Note that Abraham's righteousness, in the sight of God, preceded the establishment of the Jews as a chosen people; thus, Paul speaks of Abram as the ancestor of both Jews and Gentiles.
- 2) Debate the effect Abraham's faith had on his response to God's promises. What physical circumstances could have led him to doubt? What truths about God may have helped him overcome these circumstances?
- 3) Mention that Abraham was not sin-free, but he trusted God to do what God had said. How complete is our trust in God? What can we do to show that we believe in God's promise to us in Christ?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Discuss the role of Sarah in the fulfillment of God's promises. In what way is her trust in God separate from Abraham's faith? How did her responses demonstrate that her faith was not always mature?
2. Encourage participants to write a paragraph or short poem about the righteousness of God manifested in Abraham or in someone whom they know.
3. Since today is Mother's Day, briefly discuss aspects of Sarah's life.

KEY VERSES: "[Abraham] grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." Romans 4:20-21.