**Sermon Title: Old Testament Illustrations of Justification by Faith Alone, Part 5**

**Sermon Text: Romans 4:16-25**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to an understanding of justification by faith alone.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 4 truths related to salvation by Divine Power, and not human effort.**

**I. Justification is initiated by God’s grace. V.16-17**

**II. Justification is implied by Abraham’s faith. V.18-21**

**III. Justification is validated by Abraham’s faith. V.22**

**IV. Justification is applied by Abraham’s faith. V.23-25**

**I. Justification is initiated by God’s grace. V.16-17**

A. It is God who is able to bring into existence things that do not exist. V.16

B. It is God who gives life to the dead. V.17

C. It is God who makes the promise. V.18, 20

D. It is God who had power to do what He has promised. V.21

E. It is all dependent on the strength of God. V.17, 21

The promise of the inheritance is grasped by faith, the absolute assurance, that sure about God and the promises of God.

Paul demonstrates the “reckoning, imputing, crediting of Abraham’s faith as righteousness is an entirely gracious act, that by its very nature excludes any human effort to attain. It was God’s plan to rest upon faith from man’s side, in order that on God’s side it might be a matter of grace.

Paul’s “universalism” is a qualified universalism that gives the Gentiles who believe the same opportunity as believing Jews, to respond to the Gospel and become part of the people who God is calling out of the world in the last days.

(**Romans 11:11-30; 4:11-12**) (Spiritual meaning)

Abraham trusted in God’s ability to bring life from the body of Abraham and the dead and barren womb of Sarah. Abraham’s faith in God and His promises had to transcend, science, logic, and reality. In the Old Testament call normally refers to God’s creative work.

**Isaiah 41:4** Who has performed and done *it*, Calling the generations from the beginning?`I, the LORD, am the first; And with the last I *am* He.'"

**Isaiah 48:13** Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; *When* I call to them, They stand up together.

**Deuteronomy 32:29** Oh, that they were wise, *that* they understood this, *That* they would consider their latter end!

**1 Samuel 2:6** "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.

**II. Justification is implied by Abraham’s faith. V.18-21**

This section focuses on the positive characteristics of Abraham’s faith, the focus is still on the promise of an heir, Abraham responded to the promise – in faith – and demonstrates how that faith secured God’s approval and a declaration of righteousness by God.

Chrysostom’s Quote: “It was against man’s hope, in hope, which is of God.”

Abraham had every reason, from a human point of view, to give up the attempt or to not even make the effort to produce a child through Sarah. His faith flew in the face of that hope which is founded on the evidence of reason and common sense.

Yet his faith was firmly based on the hope that springs from the promises and character of God. Faith continues to believe God’s promises to the believer even as they observe the physical, mental, emotional, situational, or circumstantial condition that could render the fulfillment of that promise being unlikely.

Abraham avoided a deep seated and permanent attitude of distrust and inconsistency in relationship to God and His promises. Unlike the “double-minded or double-soul” person who displays a deeply rooted division in their attitude toward God and the people of God.

**James 1:6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; **8** *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Struggling faith is not doubt, just as temptation to sin is not itself sin. The fact that Abraham was trying to understand [***Genesis 15:1*** *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."* ***2*** *But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"* ***3*** *Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"*] how God’s promise could be fulfilled indicates he was looking for a way of fulfillment, although he could not yet see a way.

Struggling faith, wrestles with the problem, which is an outworking of strong faith in God. Such faith refuses to doubt and chooses to trust in God’s promises, even when fulfillment doesn’t fit human logic.

God’s testing of His children’s faith is designed to strengthen their trust or show them where there may be weaknesses, the response should be one of thanks to Him, no matter how difficult, painful, and confusing it may be at the time.

**James 1:2** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. **4** But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

When Abraham was tested by God, he grew stronger in faith, not weaker.

John Calvin wisely observed that true believers, “are never so enlightened that there remains are no remains of ignorance, nor is the heart so established that there are no misgivings.” Godly faith is not full understanding but full trust, “the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.” (**Hebrews 11:1**)

(John MacArthur Commentary Romans 1-8; pp. 265)

How does a believer strengthen in faith, the same way anything gains strength in meeting and overcoming opposition – muscles when weights are raised; holiness when temptation is successfully resisted. Abraham’s faith gained strength from its victory over the hindrances created by the conflict between God’s promises and the physical evidence.

**III. Justification is validated by Abraham’s faith. V.22**

**(Genesis 15:6; Genesis 17)**

**IV. Justification is applied by Abraham’s faith. V.23-25**

Christians have been the implicit focus of this whole Chapter 4. Christians share with Abraham the same basics for justification – faith – and the same God as the object of faith.

A. Christians are those “to whom it was going to be reckoned” that is those who experience in its eschatological fullness the righteousness that Abraham attained by faith.

B. Christians are those believers in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

**Romans 8:11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

**Romans 10:9** that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

**1 Corinthians 6:14** And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

It is the God of the promise, the promise to Abraham but ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ and Christians, is whom both Abraham and we believe.

**Conclusion:** As Jesus’s death provides the necessary grounds on which God’s justifying action can proceed, so His resurrection, by vindicating Christ and freeing forever from the penalty, power, and presence of sin (Romans 6:10), this provides for the ongoing power over sin, experienced by the believer who is in union with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.