

**All Citizens Christian Church Calgary**

**Bible Study:** Tuesday, May 6th, 2025. **Topic: THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS 4**

**FAITH vs WORKS**

Before we go deep into this discussion, I want us to see the focus of Apostle Paul in this epistle. Although his illustration is using the faith of Abraham that resulted in the birth of Isaac, his major focus is on faith that brings salvation. Let me say here that the faith that brings miracles and the one that brings salvation is the same and they are executed in the same way.

Faith is spiritual and supernatural. It is based on mercy, favor, and the grace of God. Humans therefore have little to do with the outcome of faith. Some who think deeply would therefore say, since man has no input when it comes to faith, then if things do not work out for me as expected or I do not get born again, it is God’s fault as I have nothing to do with it. If you notice, I did not say that humans have nothing to do about faith. Rather, I said humans have little to do with the outcome of faith. The major instrument that triggers faith is belief. So, belief is the trigger, while mercy, favor and grace are the ingredients. Without belief, we would not be talking about faith at all. God has abundance of grace, mercy, and favor with Him but if we do not believe in Him, He will not release them.

The Bible says Abraham believed God. Our job when it comes to faith is to believe in the one who is able to do it because he that comes to God must believe. Heb 11:6. Once we break that link of belief, we should not expect any positive outcome about faith. The apostle defined belief in Rom 4: 21-22 when he said 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.” What the Apostle is saying here is that salvation cannot happen by works and it is only faith that brings salvation.

Works as spoken by Apostle Paul in the context of Romans 4, is talking about self-effort unto salvation. He is saying that is impossible. We should not confuse it with works spoken about by Apostle James in James 2:18 which actually means action. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works (action), and I will show you my faith by my (actions) works. You may have noticed that he said I will show you my faith by my works.

Physical effort to salvation is futile. Abraham would never have been able to justify himself if he relied on works as all forces were against him. David, who we will talk about later, would have been a failure if not for faith as his ‘works’ has damaged his reputation. He was a typical example of someone who knew the law but was unable to keep it. You could receive miracles without faith but you cannot receive salvation without faith Heb 11:6.

**OUTLINE:**

**Justification by Faith or Works?**

**The justification of Abraham** Was it by faith or by works? **Rom 4:1-4.**

Abraham believed God, and that was how he was justified. **Gen 15:1-6**

Apostle Paul continues his argument by introducing Abraham into the equation. He knows that the Jews will not argue about the justification of Abraham by God. The fact which the Apostle wants to bring out is how did the justification of Abraham happen. Rom 4:3

If Abraham’s justification is by works, then he has a lot to boast of. If our justification is also by our works, then we also have a lot to boast about. **Eph 2: 8-9**. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

**Rom 4:4-8.** The reciprocity of works is obligatory but the justification by faith is simply by the mercy of God. It has nothing to do with works.

**The justification of David by faith. Rom: 4:5-8, Psalm 32:1-2, 51:9-12.**

The Apostle presented his case by quoting another important figure in the lives of the Jews which is David. I have always said that Apostle Paul is ahead of the game. By using Abraham, a personality that was justified before the law and the covenant he silenced the Jews who were trying to use circumcision as a justification for the relationship with God and by referring to David, another character after the law and circumcision, he showed clearly that by works no man can be saved as David was known to have mess up big time.

**How did Abraham prove that he believed God?**

**Heb 11:8-11, 17-19**

1. **Gen 12: 1-4**. He left Haran - he took physical steps to actualize his belief. He might have remained in Haran and asked God to do His thing because what God cannot do does not exist. By this assertion, we leave everything to God to do. This is what Apostle James was speaking about, which some considered as contradictory to the works of Apostle Paul in Romans, when James said in James 2:26 that so faith without works is dead also.
2. **Rom 4:19-22.** He did not consider the physical nature of his body or that of Sarah.
3. Furthermore, he went ahead to sacrifice Isaac. Heb. 11:17-19

**How did you prove your faith in God in some challenges in life? Personal testimonies.**

**When was Abrahams’s faith credited to him for righteousness?**

Was it before or after the circumcision? **Rom 4:9-16, Gen 15: 2-6** (Abraham believed God before circumcision was instituted). The reasoning behind this statement of Apostle Paul was to convince the Jews that Abraham was the progenitor of both the Jews and the Gentiles. If Abraham was justified before circumcision, there is no reason the Gentiles would not be justified even though they are not circumcised. A sign is a pointer while a seal is an authenticator. Therefore, the circumcision is the authentication to Abrham that righteousness which God has imputed on him.

The covenant of circumcision, like baptism was an outward sign that justification has taken place. It is also a seal of the righteousness that has been imputed on Abraham.

Abraham did not receive his promise through the law. The promise becomes worthless if we focus on the law because the law in itself brings wrath.

**Rom 4:17-25**

The Promise to Abraham was through faith and not the law. **Rom 4:13-15, (Gen 15:1-6,**

The promise that Abraham was going to be the father of nations was not by the law but by faith: Explain Rom 4:16-17

Believing against all hope (It was a physically hopeless situation). Do we still do that? How did Abraham believe against all hope?

1. His body was dead, since he was about 100 years old.
2. Sarah’s womb was also dead.

Where was Abraham’s works in all these? God did not say he would magically put a child in Sarah’s womb like he did for Mary. There has to be a contact between him and Sarah, with the belief that the contact would yield fruits.

Note vs 15 did not say where there is no law there is no sin, rather it says where there is no law there is no transgression. An act could be inherently wrong although there may be no law against it.

Why was Abraham’s belief accounted to him for righteousness? Rom 4:20-22.

CONCLUSION: Faith is not a gambling. Heb 11:1. Faith is the assurance that God can do anything and he will do as you have believed. The situation of Abraham was humanly impossible. He may have been able to father a child at 75 when he impregnated Hagar but at 100, and Sarah now 90 could only happen by faith. We are bombarded in this generation by physical things thus reducing our ability to rely on God. As humans we cannot begin to demonstrate faith from big things we must learn to demonstrate or train our faith from a lower level to a higher level.