

History of Righteousness

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[0 : 00] I started doing park run last year. It was a regular gathering on Saturday. I said in the morning to run, or in my case, to walk, 5K around Ataman and Willoughby, with a big group of people.

And at the end of the run, we scanned a barcode that records our time of the day. Apart from the exercise, I enjoyed being a walker in a lap-around course.

I got to say hello to the same group of people, people that I actually know, two to three times as they passed me in a different direction. I often finish the top five longest time, in real time, which means the last five.

And I try not to be the last one to finish. As I walk the course slowly, it was most encouraging when someone joined to finish a course together at the same pace as me.

When we're working on something hard or require endurance, having a pace setter or companion can make the journey more doable and enjoyable.

[1 : 15] Sometimes that may be the key to a breakthrough in our quest or journeys. Paul provides the best companion or a pace setter for us to follow in the passage we are looking at today.

Abraham, a great figure in the Old Testament, is well-known by the original audience, also become well-known by three of the major religions in our modern days.

Judaism, Christianity, and Muslim. He had the right relationship with God based on faith alone. He is someone from way past to show us how God has always been crediting righteousness by faith. Abraham was a man, a human being, just like any one of us when God called him. Let me explain. Abraham was a child to his parents, a husband to his spouse, and a parent to his children.

He cared for his deceased brother's children and earned a living as a migrant in a foreign land. He was well-to-do, but at the same time, he cared a lot about his close relatives.

[2 : 38] He knew what to do to protect them if they get into trouble, willing to take a fight when needed. He was generous and valued relationship above other things.

He was also a man of principles, giving honors where honors are due, and not taking advantage of any situation to profit for himself. However, driven by fear, he also did some not very honorable things.

He told only a half-truth about his marital status on a few occasions and almost caused irreparable consequences. He took things into his own hands to ensure there was someone to look after his family and his wealth when he died.

If you do not know much about Abraham, let me encourage you to read the Old Testament book of Genesis, starting from chapter 12.

But from what I just described, what do you think of him? He sounded like all kinds of guys, just a normal human being, isn't he?

[3 : 52] He sounds all right, isn't he? Paul states in our chapter today, in verse 1 to 2, what then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?

If in fact Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. Even Paul says, looking at what Abraham did, based on his works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Why is it not before God? Because the scripture said, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham's right standing with God does not come from his obedience or works.

It was credited to him. The word credited appears 10 times in this passage, with the word Kant in verse 8, which both come from the same original language of the New Testament.

They are all accounting terms, meaning to Kant as. So far in our journey in Romans, one observation I have is that Paul tends to repeat the same phrase or word to highlight his points. [5 : 16] In Steve's introduction, a few weeks back on chapter 1, he pointed out that the word gospel shows up more in the first 17 verses than anywhere else in Romans.

The word gospel appears more per face in these verses than anywhere else in the Bible. In the second half of chapter 1, Paul shows us a long and devastating critics of human nature and how we deserve only God's wrath and his righteous anger.

And in chapter 2, the theme judgment shows how our religiosity and hypocrisy further inflame God's wrath and justify God's righteous judgment against us.

And last week, in chapter 3, the word righteousness took a podium position after leaving all the other runners behind. In our chapter today, in chapter 4, Paul shows us that the righteousness that was leading the pack of runners has a special name.

It was credited righteousness. To credit something is to confer a status that was not there before.

[6 : 39] It would be like end of the pack run, a person who ran first waited for me at the finish line and handed me his barcode to scan as my record.

And not just that, the person finished first, not just him, but everyone else finished before or after me was congratulating me, celebrating and cheering that I'm the first with the shortest time.

Ridiculous sounds to be. But faith counted as righteousness means that God treated Abraham as though he lived a righteous life. His faith was not righteous, but God counted it as if it were.

Now, to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work, but trusts God, who justifies ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

Faith credited as righteousness is a profound concept. I believe it's much easier for us humans to understand the system of obligation that we live in than to understand what it means to have faith credited as righteousness.

[8 : 00] People living in a democratic country often highlight the freedom and the right they enjoy and decry the lack of freedom of those living in others.

But are you really or truly free? Are you truly? Can you truly be whoever and whatever you want to be?

Can anyone truly disregard the law? Relationally, when someone is nice to me, I feel obliged to return the favor or I feel indebted to that person.

But on the other hand, if someone harms me or my family, I feel I have the right to harm them back. I'm glad I'm refrained from doing so overly due to our legal system.

A few weeks ago, in my personal Bible reading and reflection time, I read about a conversation a father had with him when he was in his last year in high school.

[9 : 10] And he said, son, you know, as soon as you finish school, you have to look for a job every day until you find one. Your success or failure will mean a good or bad reputation for our family.

We are obliged to do right by our family or our society. By human standards, we are considered right and good if we abide by the law of our society.

Live within our means, treat others nicely, and be generous and charitable. We should pack ourselves on the back and say, well done, mate. And it is so easy for us to misunderstand God requires the same thing from us.

That we need to earn favor from God. That we need to work for our righteousness. But on the fifth side, we can also fall into thinking that we deserve God's grace.

As soon as we think that we can earn God's favor and be righteous in His sight by our effort, we cheapen the grace that God has shown through His Son, Jesus.

[10 : 25] We steal God's glory and do not know what saving faith is about. I'm glad Abraham has been highlighted as our case study of faith, showing us what saving faith is about.

from verse 9 to 12, it says this, Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. He received a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith, so that he is a father of all who believe, in order that righteousness may be credited to them, who also follow the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had.

Abraham is not just our pay setter. he is also our guarantee because Paul says he is a father of all who believes, of all who follow in the footsteps of his faith.

We, as we follow him, we experience the reality of being loved and accepted by God while we are sinful and imperfect.

Abraham was not himself righteous, perfect, or blameless, but God treated him as though he were. God shows us through Abraham that our justification or credited righteousness is by faith in him alone.

[11:52] So, what does it mean to follow in faith? What is the faith that saved Abraham and which will save us also? first five tell us that faith equals trust God who justifies the ungodly.

It does not merely believe God exists, but believes and trust in what God has and will do for us. Verse 17 to 25 shows us that believe God or trust God has these three things.

Firstly, verse 18 to 19 against all hope Abraham in hope believed and so become the father of many nations.

Just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead.

God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, but he was still childless when he was about a hundred years old.

[13:09] Abraham's body appeared hopeless, but he does not go on appearance. Faith is not opposed to reason, but it's sometimes opposed to feelings and appearance.

it's not simply an optimism about life in general, not going on about saying always look on the bright side of life, nor faith in oneself.

It does not keep saying, I think I can as we come at the mountain. Abraham shows that saving faith is kind of a death to self-trust.

It's going on something despite our weakness, feeling, and perceptions. He goes on God's promise. So first things, not go on appearance, but goes on God's promise.

Secondly, verse 20 to 21, yet he did not waiver to unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded things that were not.

[14:51] So he insisted on this measured reflection about God. Abraham shows us that saving faith and believing in God is not the absence of thinking, but rather a profound insistence on acting out of our focus on the facts about God.

Saving faith is thinking about who God is and his power and focusing about the facts of him.

Abraham did not have much to go on except God's word of promise.

We have far more facts about God to focus on, a far greater demonstration of his love and power, because we know that God raised his own son, Jesus, to life as we just celebrated Easter only a month ago.

So secondly, he insists on focusing on facts about God. Thirdly, which is developed from what I just said, believe God means to trust the bare words of God.

Abraham believed that God had the power to do what he has promised. He trusts in his word. Verse 21, being fully persuaded, that God had power to do what he had promised it.

[16:17] Are you willing to take God at his word when feeling popular opinion and common sense contradict God's promise?

Are you going to look at what he has said and let that define reality for you? So there are three things. Go on God's promise, insist on focus on the facts about God and trust the bare words of God.

You can have lots and lots of strong faith that God exists, that he is loving, that he is holy. You can believe that the Bible is of God's holy word.

You can show great reverence for God. Yet, seek to be your own savior and justify by trusting your performance in religion, moral character, job, or parenting.

You can let those things define reality for you or have saving faith and transfer your trust to God and his word. And when you do, you will enjoy your faith journey with Abraham and many others who have gone before you and after you to treasure Jesus together.

[17:38] So, how are we saved? Paul says in verse 23 to 25, the word it was credited to him were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness for us, who believe in him, who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. God's promise of credited righteousness is for us, who believe in God, who raised his son Jesus for our sins and

justification.

Tim Keller sums it up this way, Abraham's faith was in the promise of a descendant. Our faith is in what God says one of his descendants has achieved.

This is a promise which is to define our reality and shape our lives. As I illustrated before, being credited or counted as righteousness is like the runner that finished first in a 5k pack run did under 20 minutes and wait at the finish line for another 30 or 40 minutes to give me his barcode to record as my time.

But not just that, he grabbed my barcode as his record. And so I can count with his best record and he took my bad record onto himself.

[19 : 09] The person who come out victorious and waiting and trade places with us is not Abraham but our savior Jesus. The descendant of Abraham that we are looking to is an author and perfecter of faith who endures a cross for the joy set before him.

Our salvation is nothing to do with what is in us or what we achieve but has everything to do with God's work of grace in his son Jesus.

Abraham is one of many witnesses that point us to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith. You can see the whole list of examples in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapter 11.

12. And in chapter 12. Verse 2-3 it says this. For the joy set before him which Jesus he endured the cross scorning his shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.

Jesus endured the cross for God to credit his righteousness to us. As we receive our righteousness we also join in the joy that was before Jesus and give glory to God and have a hopeful humility about ourselves.

[20 : 48] Crucifixion is the most shameful way to be punished. Jesus scorned shame and credited us righteous so that we do not need to be ashamed of our sins or ourselves.

Instead we can be honest about our weakness and bring them out into the open for God to deal with them. Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God to rule the world and through faith we also rule with him.

our life is never out of control under the kingship of Jesus. Our purpose and identity in the world are to live as children of Jesus credited righteousness and rule with him.

When we consider Jesus who induced such opposition from sinners we can live without fear of the future and despair at our failing.

The power that raised Jesus to life is our justification and assurance that we will be raised to enjoy eternal life in a renewed world.

[22 : 03] Therefore let us fix our eyes on Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith as we continue our journey of being transformed by the gospel through Romans.