

ROMANS 1-4: What Makes a Man a Believer

The Story of Abraham's Faith

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible study. I'm Pat Morley, and today we're going to be talking about the story of Abraham's faith. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter four.

THE PROBLEM WE FACE THAT PAUL IS ADDRESSING

We're going to begin by talking about the problem we face that Paul is addressing in this text. We know that he had people from all different walks of life both Gentiles and Jews who had become Christians. We also know that they're young in their faith. We also know there are some still considering faith that because he is the apostle to the Gentiles, he's very interested in winning them to Jesus.

I want to talk to you as a disciple maker. Disciple maker to disciple maker, me to you, and then take a look at Paul's words because he is the ultimate disciple maker and see what they have to say for us.

So what is the problem that we're facing that he's addressing? It's this. Someone you know, someone you care deeply about right now has serious doubts about whether to believe in Jesus Christ, to have faith in God. It might be that they've led an extremely sinful life and they just don't seem to be able to get by that. They don't feel like that God could ever forgive them. It might be somebody who has a scientific mind, so they just can't get past the idea that you can't prove the existence of God or they have a difficult time believing the Bible because it does have a lot of figurative language. Or perhaps this person that you care deeply about, they're basically a good and decent person, and they feel like they have done enough good works that they should deserve something for that. They deserve salvation. Or maybe, like in my own case, the person you deeply care about has heard some bad teaching and has misunderstood what's involved in the gospel, and they need to have some correction. Or possibly it's that, and again like me, that somebody has faith but now they think they really need to do something more to prove that God didn't make a mistake.

I know in my own case when I became a Christian, I kept praying the prayer of salvation over and over again because I didn't know that once you had received faith that you had it. I thought that it was something you kept losing. So you needed to get it back again. Paul wants to correct that has a disciple maker. You want to correct that as a disciple maker. Or if you're the person that needs to have that corrected; we want to take care of that in this message today as well.

And then I remember once I became a Christian, I had led a sinful life, and so I knew that at that point that I was saved by faith. But I figured I needed to add works to that. I felt like okay, saved by faith but sanctified by works. I felt like I needed to add something in order to be able to deserve the salvation that God was offering me.

I remember a terrible business crisis at the 14 year mark in my spiritual journey. I remember sitting down and typing out on a piece of paper in a computer asking God for some relief, asking God for some help, and I remember my argument basically went along the lines of look at all I've done. And because of my record, wouldn't you be willing to help me? I said, "God, you know how I have been a man of integrity. Lord, you know how I have tried to use and have used money with faithfulness. God, you know

how I'm trying to be a godly husband. Lord, you know how I'm always there for my kids. Lord, you know how many little old ladies I've helped cross the street. God, you know all of the good deeds that I've done, and I just need some help. You can see the problem." I'm trying to negotiate with God to help me because I feel like at that point I was feeling like I had put some credits in my column.

And just like I'm talking to you right now, I heard a voice in my head. God said to me, "Pat, nothing you do will ever make you good enough for me to love you. I love you because I made you." And peace and grace swept over me. For the first time ever I actually understood what grace was, that we are justified by faith and faith alone.

Let me give you the Big Idea for the day. **If you have faith, nothing else matters. If you don't have faith, nothing else matters.** In other words, if you have faith, nothing else matters. You don't need anything else. But if you don't have faith, nothing else matters either because all the things that you think you might add to faith in order to get salvation, they don't make any difference.

So let's go ahead and talk then about what Romans four is talking about, and that's justification by faith alone.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

In the first verse, it says, "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, according to the flesh discovered in this matter." What is this matter that Paul is going to be talking about in Romans four? It is justification by faith alone. From the previous chapter, chapter three, and you don't need to look this up. I'll just read it. Verses 28 to 31, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." There's the law. "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too. Since there is only one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith." So he's talked about the law. He's talked about circumcision, and then in verse 31, "Do we then nullify the law by this faith? No, not at all. Rather, we uphold the law." So there is the law.

And so now in chapter four, Paul is going to unpack this. Now I think what we're going to do in our talk here today is I'm going to summarize these arguments for you rather than go through them one by one, detail by detail. You might remember I said in a previous message that the Bible is a river big enough so the theologians can drown themselves, and you can quickly do that here. But I'm talking disciple maker now to disciple maker to cover the things that we need to know so that we can help men and people we care about who may not be men understand that justification is by faith alone. And that if they have faith, nothing else matters. But if they don't have this faith, then nothing else matters here.

So I'm going to go ahead and throw up on the screen now an outline. This outline. Which shows that the subject of Romans four is justification by faith alone and that we're going to be unpacking what it said in Romans 3:28-31. So in the first three verses, we see that Abraham is justified by faith. We'll take a look at that in a minute. Then in verses four through eight, how this faith is apart from works, and then in verses nine and 12, how faith is before circumcision, something we talked about in a previous message if you've been with us. And then in verses 13 to 15, how faith is also apart from the law. So there are the works, the circumcision, and the law that is the matter that Paul wants to talk about with regard to Abraham here. And then in verses 16 to 22, you can see that the subject there is that Abraham is the father of all who share his faith. And then in 23 to 25, that justification is for all who believe, including us who believe the gospel of Jesus.

In the very first verse of Romans chapter four, we understand that this is what he wants to talk about. In verse two, we read if in fact Abraham was justified, there's that word justified, by works, he had something to boast about. But not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So we see right away at the top of the chapter Paul is talking

about being justified. All the way down to verse 25, the last word is that he was raised to life, Jesus was raised to life for our, what? For our justification.

So what is justification? It's a Bible word. Ultimately it really means salvation. In a technical sense, what it means is that God declares us righteous. By faith he acquits us, if you will, because we believe in his word. We believe his promise, and he credits that belief to us as righteousness. And nothing else is needed. And then that's why he goes on to make these arguments that it is apart from works, it is before circumcision, it is a part from law. These three things are not requirements.

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." This comes from Genesis 15:6 where God has called Abraham and his wife Sarah from a land that probably would be like living in Scottsdale, Arizona. He was going to live a very healthy, happy retirement, but at 75, he gets... Well, before that he gets called to another land. And then at the age of 75, God appears to Abraham, takes him out and shows him all the stars in the sky. And he tells Abraham, "I'm going to bless you, and you're going to be the father of many people." And Genesis 15 verse six says that Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Abraham didn't have to do anything. He simply had to put his faith, his belief in God, and he was justified before God. Justification is by faith alone.

It would be onerous for me to take you through all the times it's actually mentioned in the scriptures, but in this chapter alone, eight times it's mentioned that faith is how we are credited with righteousness. It says things in different places like the words it was credited to him were written not for him alone. They were also written for us. Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness in verse nine. So that's what this is about. Justification by faith, and it's alone. It's without any regard to works. It's without regard to any outward sign or seal like circumcision or in the case of Christians today, baptism. It's without regard to law, the keeping of the Decalogue. We've learned in a previous lesson that the law was actually given, along with judgment, as a tutor not to keep men from Christ but to bury to keep us from Christ but rather a tutor that would show us the way to Christ. That's the purpose of the law.

So that is the text for this day.

Again, the Big Idea here is **if you have faith, nothing else matters. If you don't have faith, nothing else matters.** Abraham is the father of us all it says in the text. He's the father of us all, and it's the father of this faith that creates justification or being declared or credited with righteousness in the sight of God being acquitted before God by faith and nothing else. No law, no works, no outward sign, no outward seal, like circumcision or baptism. If we have faith, nothing else matters. But likewise, if we don't have faith, nothing else matters.

HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE WHO IS WAVERING

Finally, let's talk then about how you can help someone who is wavering in their faith. Again, it might be somebody who just can't get by the sins of their path. They just don't feel like they could ever be worthy of God's unmerited favor, his grace. Or it might be someone who, again like me, has received some bad teaching and doesn't correctly understand the gospel. They think that faith is not enough, that they have to add some works in order to be able to deserve it. In other words, they have to prove themselves worthy of this salvation.

Men, you and I are disciple makers and the first part of making disciples is evangelism. It's sharing the gospel of Jesus with men and helping them to understand that if they have faith, nothing else matters. But if they don't have faith, nothing else matters either. To urge them, to encourage them to have faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ. And it's not that they have to have a lot of faith or a certain amount of faith, they just need to have any faith. In other words, if you have to have a certain amount of faith, then

that is turning faith into a work. If faith is simply believing God, believing his gospel, believing that Jesus is who he says he is, and that he did what he said he did. And then receiving that by grace through faith. So it could also be a man who has a scientific or a woman who has a scientific mind. So the idea is that to help them understand that it is by faith. It is not by works. They don't need to understand anything. They simply need to, as an act of their will, make a decision that they're going to put their faith in Jesus and then allow Jesus to tutor their hearts and help them after they become a Christian to resolve these issues that they have. Or maybe it's somebody who thinks, again, that their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. We learned in Romans three that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and we need a savior. And we receive this savior, as Paul's teaching us through the example of Abraham, through faith, by believing God. All that's needed is to believe God, and we will be justified. We will be credited with God's righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus Christ that came through his propitiation or his atonement for our sins.

Again, the Big Idea today, I just want to encourage you as a disciple maker, this is a disciple maker Paul talking to you a disciple maker. And I want to encourage you to use this example and use this Big Idea as a discussion started with men. It's a way that you can help them to think more deeply about the faith they're wavering to have. Again, the Big Idea, **If you have faith, nothing else matters. If you don't have faith, nothing else matters.** Help men think thorough the implications of this Big Idea. It's a great way to start a conversation. Let's pray.

Our dearest father, thank you for Paul and for the word that we have here about justification by faith alone, salvation by faith by believing alone, apart from the good works or outward sign of law. I pray, God that for every man who needs to hear from self this message or has someone in mind that needs to hear this message that you will help them to dwell upon, meditate upon, reflect upon and think through the implications of this idea that if you have faith, nothing else matters. If you don't have faith, nothing else matters. And we ask this in the powerful name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen.

Thank you, men.