

(19) "Against All Hope": Faith and Circumstances (4:17b-22)

Romans: The Outwork of the Righteousness of God

Justification!—Line of Thought

- The Way of Works Is Blocked (1:18–3:20).
- There Is Another Way (and the Only Way): Justification by Grace through Faith (3:21-26).
- The New Way Requires Exclusivity (3:27-31).
 - Exclusivity: Faith Alone, Not Faith Plus Works.
 - Universality: All Are Saved in the Same Way.
 - Connectivity: The Law Is the Pointer to the Faith.
- The New Way Was Illustrated by the Life of Abraham (and David) (Ch 4).
 - Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Not Works (4:1-8).
 - Abraham Was Justified as a Gentile, Not a Jew (4:9-12).
 - Abraham as Justified by the Promise, Not the Law (4:13-17a).
 - Abraham Was Justified by Hope, Not Circumstance (4:17b-22).
 - Abraham's Path Is Ours, too, Not Just for Himself (4:23-25).
- The New Life Was Necessitated by the Law (Ch 5).

Seeing thru the Circumstances

- ^{17a} (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU")
- ^bin the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.
- ¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."
- ¹⁹ Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;
- ²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,
- ²¹ and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.
- ²² Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.
(Rom 4:17-22 NAU)

Circumstances vs. Faith

- Circumstance <= *circum* + *stare*
 - Latin: *circum* = around; *stare* = stand.
 - Things in Life that Stand around Us; Details and Events of Life; Trees That Hide the Forest; Sensible Appearance That May Block the View of the Invisible but True Reality.
- “Now faith is the assurance of *things hoped for*, the conviction of things not seen.² For by it the men of old gained approval.³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” (Heb 11:1-3)

Circumstances of Abraham's Life

- At Birth, Named by His Father as Abram ("Exalted Father").
 - His Father Worshipped Idols, So He Was a Pagan.
- He Married a Stunningly Beautiful Wife Sarah, Who Was Sterile.
 - He Was Wealthy, but Had No Heir.
- At the Age of 48, the World Fell into Chaos due to the Confusion of Languages at Babel.
 - He Was Getting Old, but Had No Purpose of Life.
- At the Age of 70, God Revealed to Him, and Gave 3 Promises: Land, Nation, and Blessings.

Circumstances of Abraham's Life

- His Father Terah Led the Family Out of Ur, but Detoured to Haran, a Cult Center for Moon God, for the Sake of Making a Living.
- At 75, He Went to the Land of Canaan.
 - He Left His Country, Tribe and Clan, and All the False gods.
- At c.80, He Had a Crisis of Faith, and Lost His Wife to the Egyptian Pharaoh, before God Took Her Back.
 - He Had a Conversion in Grace, and Demonstrated True Faith by Meekness during the Separation with Lot.
- At 84. He Defeat the Four Kings of the East, Paid Tithe to God through Melchizedek, and Was Justified by Faith.

Circumstances of Abraham's Life

- At 85, He Demonstrated Weakness in Faith by Accepting a Concubine Hagar.
 - At 86, He Got a Son Ishmael from the Concubine.
- At 99, He Was Promised Isaac.
 - He Was Circumcised and Became a Jew.
 - He Was Renamed by God as Abraham ("Father of Many Nations").
 - He Demonstrated for Another Time the Weakness of Faith, Lied Again about His Wife; but God Kept Her for God's Honor.
- At 100, He Got the Son of Promise, Isaac.

Circumstances of Abraham's Life

- At 104, He Put God's Interest over his Own, and Sent Away His Son Ishmael.
- At 136, He Was Tested to Bind (and Kill) His Only Begotten Son Isaac, and He Passed.
- At 137, He Buried His Wife in a Purchased Land in Canaan, Having a Foothold in the Promised Land.
- At 140, He Find a Good Wife Rebecca for His Son Isaac.
- At 160, He Saw the Birth of the Twin, Esau and Jacob.
- At 175, He Died, after Sending Away the Other Sons from a Later Wife Keturah.

Believing in a Big God

- Is Our God Big Enough?
 - Can He Do Miracles?
 - Does He Transcend Our Understanding?
 - Can He Do the Ultimate Good through the Allowed Evil?
 - Does He Keep His Promises Absolutely?
 - Is He Trustable under All Circumstances?
- True Faith Is Not about the Depth of Personal Conviction, but a Relationship with the Object of Faith, Who Is Absolutely Trustable.

Having the Right Object of Faith

- ^{17a} (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") (Gen 15:5)
- ^bin the presence of Him whom he believed, *even* God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." (Rom 4:17)
- Abraham's Name Did Not Match His Reality.
- Abraham Believed in a Big God, who
 - Created the World from Nothing, and
 - Can Make the Dead Alive.

Believing in the Word

- **“¹⁸ In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, ‘SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE (Gen 15:5).’”**
(Rom 4:18)
- Abraham Believed in the Word (Promise) of God.
 - Love and Relationship Is All About Believing the Word, Which Reveals the Character of the Person.
- He Believed before Being Matched with Sensible Reality.
- Hope Is Believing in the Promise of an Unrealized Future.

Having a Strong Faith

- “¹⁹ Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;” (Rom 4:19)
- The Strong Faith Is Seeing through the Contrary Circumstances the Invisible Reality in the Assured Word.
- The Deadness in the Body Will Be Overcome by the Life of the Spirit of God, Which Is Received through Faith.

Keeping the Growth of Faith

- “²⁰ yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,” (Rom 4:20)
- Abraham’s Faith Did Not Come in a Moment of Conversion, but a Life Time of Growth.
 - He Was Chosen by God, Revealed by God.
 - He Had Crises of Faith, thru Which Converted by God.
 - He Demonstrated True Believer’s Character.
 - He Was Changed by God, with Stumbling.
 - He Was Test by God, and Passed.

Trusting on God and His Word

- “²¹ and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.
²²Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Rom 4:21-22)”
- Believe in God’s Word because of Knowing His Character. It Is the Nature of the Saving Faith in a Love Relationship with God.
- Righteousness (Right Standing before God) Was Awarded Only in This Way.

Lessons and Applications

- Do Not Be Bound by the Circumstances of Life, See through them by Faith.
- Trust in the Word of God, because of Knowing Personally the Character of God.
- Love God, because He Loved Us First, and Have Proven It through the Cross!