

The Text

Romans 4:13-25 (CSB) For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

14 If those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made empty and the promise nullified, 15 because the law produces wrath. And where there is no law, there is no transgression.

16 This is why the promise is by faith, so that it may be according to grace, to guarantee it to all the descendants—not only to the one who is of the law but also to the one who is of Abraham's faith. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: I have made you the father of many nations—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, the one who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist. He believed, hoping against hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: So will your descendants be. 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do. 22 Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, 24 but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

The Support

So you might be asking, "Joseph, why are you beating down these gospel points. We get it--we cannot earn our salvation."

Let me approach it from the flip side. Not the flip side of legalism, which is license but the flip side of the assurance of the gospel of Christ.

As I prepared for this Bible Study, I came across a story about our assurance of salvation from the late theologian and teaching R.C. Sproul. I don't want to quote his story because I ran into the very same thing myself.

It was February 2009 and I had driven in my brother's little Kia, no cruise control, from Texas to Minneapolis in about 22 hours. I had shown up a pastor's conference hosted at John Piper's church. What was so exciting for me was not just the guest speakers but meeting other people in ministry.

I had sat down along the front row and my ears picked up on a conversation right behind me. And the conversation went something like this:

Person 1: "Are you sure that you are saved?"

Person 2: *audible grimace* "I mean, I am not so sure. Can any of us be so sure?"

Now, I am not trying to tell you how you should feel. But if you are a believer in Christ, and a reader of His word, that answer should shock you. Not only is the word of God without error but in the heart of British theologian, Lesslie Newbigin, I will do you one better. The word of God is perfect.

Psalms 19:7a (CSB) 7 The instruction of the LORD is perfect,
renewing one's life;

What do I mean by all of that? God in his word gives God-given, God-bought, God-promised, and God-sealed guarantee of our salvation in him. And if you think that, "Why does it matter?" because to think otherwise is double-mindedness--which I hope I don't have to tell you is a sin against God.

The more you and I dig and meditate and read and pray in the word of God, the more that we know we are the people of God and he has perfectly saved his people--to all of those who trust him and obey.

The promises of God are not in our obedience of the law but by faith alone

Romans 4:13-15 (CSB) For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 If those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made empty and the promise nullified, 15 because the law produces wrath. And where there is no law, there is no transgression.

This is why the word of God has to beat into us that is not by our efforts but rather by the might and the grace and the righteousness of God himself. Nobody else. And, this is why I love the doctrine of the Trinity--God in himself does it but does not do it by himself.

The sovereign grace of the Father through the life and the blood-soaked death of his Son by the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit--that is the only way to bring dead sin-filled people back to life. It is the only way.

The promises of God are by faith according to the grace of God

16 This is why the promise is by faith, so that it may be according to grace, to guarantee it to all the descendants—not only to the one who is of the law but also to the one who is of Abraham's faith. He is the father of us all.

Remember Romans 1:17 quoting Habakkuk? "The righteous shall live by faith." The promise given by God to us and we believe by faith not of ourselves but by his grace that gave us fullness of life in the first place.

And we know that he is not the promises breaker but the only being who does not break promises but God is incapable of breaking any of his promises. To do so, he would cease to be God.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (CSB) For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in him. Therefore, through him we also say "Amen" to the glory of God.

And don't get thrown off by Paul's writing:

not only to the one who is of the law but also to the one who is of Abraham's faith

He is not even suggesting that there are two ways of being saved. No. Remember earlier in Romans 2? Who are the people who received the law of God? The Jews. Who are the people who didn't receive the law? Us, the Gentiles. No matter what, if we have the faith of God we have the faith of Abraham and both Jew and Gentile claim Abraham as the father of our faith.

Where do you see God in the text? What does the text say about God?

God

The promises of God are guaranteed by God who alone creates and gives life

17 As it is written: I have made you the father of many nations—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, the one who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist.

In our Genesis series, I specifically referenced the creation and beginning of the life of mankind by God's righteousness ([Genesis 2:4-25](#)) for this very reason. Because God alone is God and in his Godship are the fullest, maxed out everything that in him as God. God alone is God and God alone is Creator and Lord over our lives because He alone is righteousness and holy and just and good and love and glorious.

How many times are we going to quote Ezekiel 36? One million if I can help it. But what is the response of God Almighty in Ezekiel 37 to his precious gospel being preached in Ezekiel 36?

Ezekiel 37:3-5 (CSB) Then he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I replied, “Lord GOD, only you know.”

4 He said to me, “Prophecy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live.

And I don't have time to get into all of chapter 37. That's another Bible Study series waiting to happen. But guess what happens? The bones LIVED!

Keep reading in Ezekiel 37 and watch something interesting happens:

Ezekiel 37:11-13 (CSB) Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Look how they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off.’ 12 Therefore, prophesy and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord GOD says: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them, my people, and lead you into the land of Israel. 13 You will know that I am the LORD, my people, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.

Where have we heard that before?

John 11:41-44 (CSB) So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you heard me. 42 I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd

standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me.” 43 After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.”

Why is that? Why does God get to raise people from the dead? To answer that is to answer this question, "Why does God get to raise sinners from being dead in their trespasses not only alive to God but get to enjoy his presence forever and ever?"

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.”

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

In other words...

God alone fulfills his promises

The Gospel

That is the good news. What God said will gloriously come to pass. For those whom God predestined, God glorified. (Romans 8:30) Past tense. Good as done.

Christ is the only man who can do that. Because Christ is God alone.

So, here is the gospel commandment of God: believe in Him, even when it looks like your hoping against hope

Let us get back into Romans 4:

18 He believed, hoping against hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: So will your descendants be.

Paul will sum up all of the first half of Romans in this precious way:

Romans 8:24-25 (CSB) Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? 25 Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

Our Responsibility

How on earth do we do that?

Again and again, I preach to you, our faith does not come from within us. The Almighty God must give us His Spirit and His Son and true life in order to believe and trust in him.

Do not weaken in the faith: the Triune God is in you

19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Do not waver in unbelief: the promises of God are yes and amen

20 He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do.

Do not indulge in self-righteousness--you are going to need a righteousness that is completely alien to you and give to you as a free gift from someone outside of yourself

22 Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us.

This is not the faith of your grandma, your parents, your pastor, or your best bud--you are called to believe in his Son

24b It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

You believe. You trust. You obey.

What happens in a instance? God gifts you his righteousness. Now you get to be with him forever and ever.

Pray

MY SIN REMOVER

Wash me clean. Make me your child.

Amen.

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Media

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