

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME IV // FULLY CONVINCED  
AUGUST 29, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** Why is faith's object—what faith is based upon or aimed at—important? Why can't the idea "just have faith" work without a basis for faith?

**Key Text:** *"In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.'<sup>19</sup> He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.<sup>20</sup> No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.<sup>22</sup> That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'<sup>23</sup> But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone,<sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,<sup>25</sup> who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:18-25)*

The humorous story is told about Sister Ana of the St. Peter Chapel traveling from Miami to Tampa. She decided to take the scenic route—mostly backroads. Along the way, she ran out of gas. She walked back to a gas station to buy some gas. The attendant at the station did not have a gas can to loan, so he took a 2-liter Dr. Pepper out of the refrigerator, poured out the Dr. Pepper, and filled the bottle with gas. When Sister Ana got back to the car, she began pouring the gas out of the Dr. Pepper 2-liter bottle into the tank. A passing driver observed the scene, slowed down, lowered his window, and said to the nun, "I admire your faith, Sister, but I don't think it's going to work!"

In today's text, Paul addresses his readers who may be baffled at the idea of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. How could God forgive on the basis of our faith in Him and not in our efforts to earn His forgiveness by keeping the law, etc.? To make his point, Paul refers to the unlikeliness of Abraham and Sarah conceiving a child in their old ages—Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90! Yet, they had faith in God's promise and Isaac was conceived and born! Similarly, our faith in God's promise to declare us righteous will result in our being forgiven.

## 1. Abraham put his faith in God's promise—not in his own expectations from his limited human perspective—and God counted it as righteousness.

*"In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be'" (v.18). Abraham had no human-based reason to believe God's promise to give him and Sarah a son, yet Abraham believed anyway—"in hope he believed against hope"—and God honored his faith. Notice that the basis of Abraham's faith was God's promise—Abraham believed "as he had been told" (v.18). Our faith must be based upon promises God already made.*

**Discuss:** Read Romans 10:17. How would you advise a new Christian to grow in his/her faith in God?

**Discuss:** How can the fact that the foundation of our faith is God's Word—not our feelings or circumstances—help us when we struggle with doubts about God?

**Discuss:** What does Paul draw attention to about Abraham’s faith in v.19-21? What lessons do you think Paul wants his readers to learn from v.19-21 about faith?

**2. It was Abraham’s faith in God’s promise—and thus against man’s expectations—that resulted in God declaring Abraham righteous.**

*“That is why his faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness’” (v.22). God’s ways—especially regarding salvation—are quite often the opposite of man’s ways!*

**Discuss:** What does Isaiah 55:8-9 teach us about God’s thoughts and ways compared to our own?

**Discuss:** What does Proverbs 14:12 teach us about our ways?

**Discuss:** What does Jeremiah 17:9 teach us about our hearts (motives, intentions)?

**3. The benefit of being declared righteous by faith is not just for Abraham alone; it is for every person who will trust in what God has done for us through Jesus.**

*“But the words ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone,<sup>24</sup> but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,<sup>25</sup> who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (v.23-25).*

The same thing that happened for Abraham—being declared righteous for his faith in God—can happen for us, too. The term “*counted to him*” (v.23) means credited to his account. Paul is reinforcing his argument that righteousness cannot be earned like a paycheck (Romans 3:23-24; 4:4-5) since nobody is good enough to earn or deserve righteousness. Rather, God credits righteousness to our account (v.24) when we trust in what Christ accomplished for us through His death and resurrection.

Specifically, Paul says God wants us to believe that He “*raised from the dead Jesus our Lord*” (v.24) and that Jesus had been “*delivered up [handed over by God] for our trespasses*” (v.25)—Jesus received God’s wrathful judgment on our sin and died on the cross in our place, and Jesus was then “*raised for our justification*” (v.25).

**Discuss:** If Christ had not been raised from the dead, why couldn’t we be justified?

**For Further Study:**

“Are All People of Faith Sons of Abraham?” article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

*Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* by Arnold Fruchtenbaum

“Abraham: the Footprint of an Obedient Faith” article at [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)

“What Was Special about Jesus’ Resurrection?” by Frank Turek video at YouTube