

(16) That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all His offspring --- not only to the adherent of the Law, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" --- in the presence of God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

(18) 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." 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.

(20) No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for our also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Think on These Things:

- 1) In some translations, v. 16 begins with "Therefore" --- requiring us to remember and apply the previous words (of chapter 4, last week's lesson). These point out that Abraham is, by faith, the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. According to this verse, why does salvation depend on faith?

**It depends on faith so that ALL of Abraham's descendants, literally and figuratively, can experience God's grace and the guarantee of Eternal Life and heaven. Only the Jews had the Law, and most Gentiles were in the dark regarding the full requirements set down by Moses.**

- 2) To whom is the promise of salvation guaranteed?

**NOT exclusively to the Jews (adherents of the Law), but to ALL people of many nations --- i.e., to those everywhere who 'share' the faith of Abraham (v. 16b).**

- 3) Abraham, at age 75, was promised an heir to inherit God's promise (Genesis 12:4-7). And God kept His promise --- about 25 years later!! (In the interim, Abraham fathered a child at age 86 with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, at Sarah's prompting – Genesis 16:15-16.) God came to Abraham at age 99 to confirm his "heir" would come from Sarah – Genesis 17:1-2, 17-22. What was the challenge to Abraham's faith as you read verses 18-19 above? Do you remember Sarah's response (Genesis 18:9-15)?

**Romans points out clearly that Abraham was keenly aware of two impediments to what the angels informed him that day: 1) Abraham, himself, approaching 100 years of age, considered his body "dead" in terms of reproduction (fathering a child); and 2) that his wife, Sarah, had been barren and childless the entirety of their marriage. Romans say that, "in hope, he believed against hope" that the message of the angels was true. Despite these roadblocks, he chose to believe God! When Sarah overheard the angels' promise, she "giggled" within herself about these two truths, plus her own age --- and the angels chastised her for her response!**

- 4) Instead of becoming “weak” in his faith by doubting God’s promise due to his and Sarah’s physical realities (v. 19), what does the scripture say happened to his faith (v. 20)? Why do you think this happened?

Abraham’s determined hope to trust in God led to a growing faith as he emphasized giving glory to God in this matter. Whenever believers “act in faith” to a promise given them by God, His actions and answers often cause our faith to experience “growth spurts.” Our trust and convictions are reaffirmed. The more this happens, the stronger our faith grows. Abraham was ‘fully convinced’ that God was able to do what He had promised (v. 21). We’ve all heard this: “If God said it, I believe it!”

- 5) Do you now understand how deep the faith of Abraham was? Do you have faith like this? Are you holding onto a promise from God that --- years later --- remains unfulfilled? If yes, would you be willing to share it with the class?

This is a personal sharing time for the class to reflect upon God’s work in their lives over their lifetimes. For example, many times parents pray for their wayward children and then die without ever seeing them return to faith. God then answers their prayers --- but not in their lifetime...! (The same type of things happened with prophets and prophesies.)

It’s always hard to hold on to convictions when the years begin to mount. Perhaps the class members will be willing to share things in their own lives they still hope for despite the present circumstances.

- 6) Why was Jesus delivered up to death? Why did the Father raise Him up?

V. 20 says that Jesus was “delivered up (to death) for our trespasses (sins), and raised for our justification” (i.e., forgiveness of sins, restored to ‘right’ standing with God). In other words, JESUS CLEARED US by ‘paying the price’ and making all things right again with the Father.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: