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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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The Faith That Justifies: Its Origin and Growth

Romans 4:22-25

I. Dusty Scrolls, Ancient Men, a Living Faith

II. Why Did God Choose Faith?

A. What's The "Therefore" There For? vs. 22

vs. 22 [NASB] *"Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness."*

1. Implies this alone could justify Abraham
2. Faith is God's chosen attribute of the human soul on which He will bestow justification
3. "Therefore" implies something intrinsic to faith which allow God to use it for justification

B. What Is Faith?

1. Abraham's experience:
 - a. heard incredible promise from God—"So shall your offspring be"
 - b. simply trusted that God was powerful enough to do what he had promised
2. Definition: Confident assurance in the power of God to perform for you personally what He has promised

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Question: Of all the attributes of the human soul, why did God choose faith as the only one which could justify us from our sins?

Not: love, patience, sincerity, obedience, gentleness, courage, humility

C. Answer #1: Faith Glorifies God

vs. 20 *“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised.”*

1. The universe created for the glory of God

Psalm 8:1 *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.*

Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

a. humanity created particularly to glorify God

Psalm 96:7-8 *Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name*

b. people exchanged the glory of God for an idol (Romans 1:23)

Romans 1:22-23 *Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images*

Romans 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*

c. salvation calls us back to glorify God

Isaiah 43:7 *“...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*

d. faith glorifies God

How does faith glorify God? Three ways...

2. God is the focus of faith

a. naturally self-focused through sin... “See what I can do!!”

b. faith is totally opposite... “See what God can do!!”

c. here, God is provider of salvation... GOD DID IT ALL

vs. 25 *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

God provided salvation Himself... God delivered Jesus over to death for our sins; God raised Jesus to life for our justification

3. God is the author of faith

Hebrews 12:2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace are you saved through faith; and this not of yourselves it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Faith is the gift of God!! God gives faith... He also sustains and perfects it!

4. God is the sustainer of faith

- a. Hebrews calls Jesus not only the author but also the perfecter of faith
- b. our own faith is His gift and His work our whole life
- c. He sustains our faith even in the darkest trials

Best example: Peter’s intense struggle of faith

Luke 22:31 *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

To whom did Christ pray for Peter? What was the content of Christ’s prayer for Pete... FOR HIS FAITH, THAT IT WOULD NOT FAIL!!!! What does God have to do with Peter’s faith? EVERYTHING!! He gave it to Peter, and He will sustain it in Peter

The only guarantee you have that you will believe 10 years from now is that God will sustain your faith so that it will not fail!

Many people see faith as our own work... what we bring to our salvation!

Like your salvation costs \$10 million... your faith supplies \$1 million, God makes up the difference by grace. NO!!! God gives the faith to you as a gift, you simply trust in God as a faithful promise-keeping God... your faith is your union with Christ, who is your righteousness

Therefore, your faith constantly glorifies God... for God is its focus... he is the author, the sustainer of your own faith

5. God is the TESTER of faith

- a. since God is able to sustain our faith, He also delights to stretch it to the uttermost
- b. He puts great obstacles in front of His promise, then overcomes those obstacles anyway
- c. He promises a 100 year old man he will father a child by a barren 90year old woman
- d. He promises to save you by a dead Savior whom He raises powerfully from the grave on the third day
- e. He promises to give you life forever in heaven, despite the fact that you've never seen anyone raised from the dead and all you see is death and decay all around you

God tests our faith, and we give glory to God by believing the seemingly unbelievable simply because GOD SAID SO, AND GOD IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED

FAITH GLORIFIES GOD!!!

D. Answer #2: Faith Accords with Grace and Guarantees Salvation

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring

1. Faith is the only human virtue that passively receives grace from God
2. The posture of faith is of a spiritual beggar receiving grace from God
3. Grace is God's lavish blessings on wretched rebellious sinners... With grace, God doesn't look to anything in us, but only in Himself
4. This makes our salvation guaranteed... for faith connects us to a righteousness that is not our own... unshakable, kept in heaven for us
5. Nothing can make us lose our faith... for God sustains us in it

NOW... this does not mean we never have struggles of faith; sometimes, trials cause us to slip in our assurance and confidence; like Simon did when he denied Christ

three times; but it's not "IF you receive" it's "WHEN you recover, strengthen your brothers." God guarantees your faith will survive if its genuine

NOR does this mean we don't have to fight for our faith in those trials

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

God guarantees that he will put the fight in you

Faith alone accords with grace, and grace guarantees salvation

E. Answer #3: Faith Humbles Humanity

1. All of this is very humbling to our pride
2. God wants none of our good works when it comes to justification
3. God only wants the posture of a trusting spiritual beggar
4. AND even that faith which justifies is a gift from Him and is sustained by His power
5. This completely gets our eyes off ourselves and our capabilities and onto God

III. What Role Does Scripture Play in This Faith?

vs. 23-24 "The words, 'It was credited to him' were written not for him alone by also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

A. Paul's doctrine of Scripture

1. Paul speaks in the passive voice here

"The words... were written..."

- a. author hidden from view
 - b. words found in Genesis... human author was Moses
 - c. real author was God... for God had a purpose that went far beyond Abraham and Moses
2. God the real author of Scripture

2 Peter 1:21 “Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting rebuking and training in righteousness...”

3. God’s intentions in Scripture are timeless... He looks down through the corridors of time to US and to OUR GENERATION

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

[Paul, using OT stories of God’s judgment on Israel] *1 Corinthians 10:11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.*

B. Answer #1: Scripture Gives Birth to Faith

1. Paul’s goal in this chapter: to promote saving, sanctifying faith in the hearts of his hearers

This entire chapter is Paul’s exposition of one verse from Genesis: “He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

This one sentence from an ancient scroll was enough to create faith in all the Roman hearers! That’s the power of Scripture!!

2. Faith comes from hearing the word

Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from hearing the word, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

- a. Abraham heard the promise directly from God and believed it
- b. the moment he did, he was justified
- c. the promise comes to us now from Scripture
- d. Scripture gives birth to faith

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

3. Therefore Scripture is foundational to our salvation

2 Timothy 3:15 “...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Thus does Paul rightly say that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets... i.e. the Scriptures

Ephesians 2:19-20 “God's household [is] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

4. Why? Timeless Testimony of a Changeless God

- a. physical letters inscribed on tablets do not change
- b. ink lines marked on scrolls do not change
- c. neither does God... God's purposes are as changeless and timeless as He is
- d. how He saved Abraham is the same way He will save you... simply by faith
- e. God has written His promises out, and you can read their changeless words day after day
- f. this gives birth to your faith

C. Answer #2: Scripture Sustains and Matures Faith

1. Our salvation moves “from faith to faith”

Romans 1:16-17 “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel, the righteousness from God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”

2. The faith that justifies is the same faith that sanctifies
3. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture to give birth to justifying faith
4. The Holy Spirit also uses Scripture to nurture faith to full maturity

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

5. Maturity comes when teachers of the word minister the word to believers

Ephesians 4:11-15 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Illus. Leaves are blown by the wind, trees stand firm in the wind; waves are blown and tossed by the wind; mighty ships cut through the waves to move to their destination

IV. What Is The Result of This Faith? “Credited righteousness”

A. Faith is Union with Christ... OUR PORTION

B. Our Portion

1. Our sins

vs. 25 “He was delivered over to death for our sins...”

It was OUR sins that nailed Christ to the tree!! We have ownership of those sins... we gave them birth through our disobedience... this was our only personal contribution to our salvation

2. Our reading of Scripture

vs. 23-24 “The words were written not for him alone but also for us...”

The precious promises become ours when we read them or hear them read from Scripture... God had us in mind when the Bible was written

3. Our faith

vs. 24 “...for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

We believe this with all our hearts... we trust in God the Father, the powerful Creator, who raised His own Son from the tomb... Our faith is a gift from God, but it is our

hearts that are convinced and assured that God has power to fulfill what He has promised

4. Our imputed righteousness // justification

- vs. 3 *"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*
- vs. 5 *However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*
- vs. 6 *David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works..."*
- vs. 9-10 *We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited?*
- vs. 22-24 *This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³ The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.*

Eleven times in this one chapter, Paul speaks of a righteousness that was credited to Abraham by faith, and that will be credited to us through that same faith!

This must be incredibly important to Paul... this concept of a crediting of righteousness by faith alone

What does it mean? Simply that, by your faith union with Christ, Christ's righteousness has become your own. There is no merit in your faith... your faith is not your righteousness, but rather, God THINKS OF YOU as righteous because He sees you in Christ

THIS IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS... THIS IS OUR JUSTIFICATION... it is ours, though we didn't do anything to deserve it... and it will be ours on Judgment Day... your faith has made Christ's righteousness your own

5. Our Lord

- vs. 24 *"...for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."*

Jesus has now become our Lord... the one whose commands we joyfully obey;

Paul speaks of

Romans 1:5 “The obedience that comes from faith.”

By faith you recognize the absolute authority of Jesus over every area of your lives... you are done with your rebellion, and the faith that justifies you now recognizes Jesus' total authority over you... you will gladly obey everything He has commanded

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

V. Application

To The Christian: Absolute assurance... The same faith that justified you years ago will never depart from your heart, though it may dim through sin and trials from time to time

If your faith is dim today, return to Christ as He is clearly portrayed in Scripture! Let your faith find its power once again in the timeless changeless words of Scripture... LOOK TO CHRIST

To the non-Christian: SAME MESSAGE!!! LOOK TO CHRIST AND TO HIM ALONE