

Romans 4:1–25

Faith That God Counts as Righteousness

Introduction: When Faith Is the Only Thing Left to Stand On

Have you ever reached the point where you realized that if God were to bless you, it would have to be purely by grace? Not because you performed well, not because you stayed consistent, not because you had a good spiritual week—but simply because God is merciful. Romans chapter 4 brings us there. Paul shows us that the life of faith has always been the way God makes people right with Himself, long before law, ritual, or religious systems ever existed.

To prove it, Paul takes us back to Abraham—not as a religious hero to admire, but as a man who learned to trust God when everything human said, “This cannot happen.”

Romans 4:1–8 — Righteousness Is Counted, Not Earned

“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”

If justification came by effort, Abraham would have had a story to tell. He left his homeland. He followed God without knowing where he was going. He was willing to offer his son. If salvation were based on human merit, Abraham would be at the front of the line.

But Scripture says something entirely different.

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Righteousness was credited, not achieved. Abraham simply trusted God’s word, and God counted that faith as righteousness.

“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”

If righteousness could be earned, God would owe salvation. But God will never be a debtor to anyone. Grace, by definition, cannot be earned.

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”

This is the door of hope. God justifies the ungodly—not the deserving. Faith keeps the door open, even after failure.

David understood this joy.

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

That word “blessed” speaks of deep, settled joy. It is the joy of knowing that God is no longer keeping a record against you.

Romans 4:9–17 — Faith Before Ritual, Promise Before Law

“Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?”

Paul points out something crucial: Abraham was declared righteous before circumcision. The ritual did not produce righteousness—it confirmed what already existed by faith.

“He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised.”

Faith came first. Ritual followed.

“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

God’s promise came centuries before the law. This ensured that salvation would be available to all—Jew and Gentile alike.

“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure.”

Grace makes salvation secure. If salvation depended on human performance, certainty would be impossible. Faith anchors salvation in God’s character, not ours.

Romans 4:18–22 — Faith That Trusts God Beyond Human Limits

“Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed.”

Abraham believed when there was no human reason to believe. He did not deny the facts—his age, Sarah’s barrenness—but he refused to let circumstances define God’s ability.

“He did not consider his own body, already dead... or the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”

Faith does not pretend problems don’t exist. Faith simply refuses to let them outrank God’s promise.

“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.”

Abraham praised God before the promise was fulfilled. That praise was rooted in confidence, not outcome.

“Being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”

That is the heart of faith—not confidence in ourselves, but confidence in God.

“And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

Romans 4:23–25 — Faith in the Risen Christ

“Now it was not written for his sake alone... but also for us.”

Abraham’s story is our story.

“It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

Jesus was delivered to the cross for our sins. He shed His blood in our place. The resurrection then declared that the sacrifice was accepted—that Jesus is God, Savior, and Lord.

“Who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

The cross paid the debt. The resurrection announced freedom.

Practical Application

- Stop measuring your standing with God by performance.
- Learn to praise God for His promises before you see the outcome.
- Trust God’s word even when circumstances argue otherwise.

A Challenge for Believers

Grace does not lead to careless living—it leads to grateful obedience. If Christ gave His life for you, live in a way that honors Him. Let love, not fear, govern your walk.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have been trying to earn God’s favor, you can stop striving today. Jesus Christ shed His blood for your sins and rose from the dead to give you life. God is not asking for your performance—He is asking for your trust.

Believe in Jesus. Receive forgiveness. Be declared righteous by grace through faith.

Romans 4 reminds us of this unshakable truth:

Righteousness is not achieved by effort—it is received by faith in a faithful God.