THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans
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      a. A description of justification (3:21-26)
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         1) Abraham and David were justified by faith (1-8)
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         3) Concerning God's worldwide promise (13-17)
         4) Concerning Abraham's exemplary faith (18-22)
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B. Review of Romans 4:13-17
   1. The promise came through faith which rests on grace to Jews as well as Gentiles.
   2. Faith in God's promise rests on His position as Creator and Sustainer of life.

ROMANS 4:18-22, *CONCERNING ABRAHAM'S EXEMPLARY FAITH*

A. Abraham's faith was based on hope in a faithful God (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."***

   1. *In hope he believed against hope*
      a. Here, Paul shows the importance of the object of hope.
      b. Abraham had placed his hope in God and His promise which is in contrast to hope in what is humanly possible.
      c. This should remind us of the importance of placing faith in the right object, Jesus Christ.

   2. God's promise was secured by God's faithfulness.
      a. The circumstance of Abraham's advanced age as well as that of his wife did not diminish God's ability to fulfill the promise.
      b. Paul quotes Genesis 15:5 to remind us of God's amazing promise, *And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*
      c. Douglas Moo, *We note here that Abraham's faith is not described as a "leap into the dark," a completely baseless, almost irrational "decision"—as Christian faith is pictured by some "existentialist" theologians—but as a "leap" from the evidence of his senses into the security of God's word and promise.*
      d. Paul's emphasis on Abraham's faith is a strong reminder that works played no part in God's promise as well as in Abraham's justification.

B. His faith was not weakened by circumstances but strengthened as he glorified God (19-21)
   1. Circumstances did not weaken Abraham's faith (19-20a), ***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. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God,***

      a. Abraham's faith remained active despite the realities of life.
         1) Abraham and Sarah were too old to produce offspring, Genesis 17:17, *Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"*
         2) God's promise could only be kept by divine provision, Hebrews 11:12, *Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

      b. Abraham's faith pictures the struggles of growing faith which con contain momentary disbelief.
         1) As he looked at his physical condition, he couldn't place faith in himself, note Genesis 17:17.
         2) As he accepted Sarah's plan for obtaining an heir, he would again be drawn away to human solutions, note Genesis 16:1-6.

3) His faith didn't waver because in the midst of moments of unbelief he turned back to faith in God not faith in himself.
   a) *Waver* means to be at odds with oneself.
   b) Mighty waves of doubt came against Abraham but he remained true to the promise of God.

4) John Calvin, *Let us also remember, that the condition of us all is the same with that of Abraham. All things around us are in opposition to the promises of God: He promises immortality; we are surrounded with mortality and corruption: he declares that he counts us just; we are covered with sins: He testifies that he is propitious and kind to us; outward judgments threaten his wrath. What then is to be done? We must with closed eyes pass by ourselves and all things connected with us, that nothing may hinder or prevent us from believing that God is true.*

2. His faith was strengthened as he focused on God (20b-21), ***but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.***

   a. Abraham's faith strengthened as he glorified God.
      1) He focused on God's nature which reminded him that God is capable of doing what He had promised, Hebrews 11:19, *He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*
      2) He focused on God's nature which reminded him that God is truthful and will do what he had promised, Hebrews 10:23, *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*
      3) John Stott, *He knew that God could keep his promises (because of his power) and he knew that he would do so (because of his faithfulness).*

   b. He was certain that God would fulfill His promises.
      1) Circumstances may still come against us but mature faith is strengthened when one maintains focus on God.
      2) Hebrews 11:1, *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
      3) Douglas Moo, *So Abraham's faith gained strength from its victory over the hindrance created by the conflict between God's promise and the physical evidence. . . It is Abraham's conviction that God is fully able to do whatever he promised that enabled his faith to overcome the obstacle of the tangible and visible "facts."*

C. It was such faith that was counted to Abraham as righteousness (22), ***That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."***

   1. Paul concludes his argument concerning Abraham's justification.
      a. *that is why* looks back to verse 21 which declares that Abraham was able to do what He promised.
      b. He uses Genesis 15:6 to restate his point that Abraham was justified by faith not by works, Genesis 15:6, *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

   2. This verse is a reminder that faith in God is not a human work but a response of trust.
      a. Romans 4:4, *Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,*
      b. Romans 11:6, *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

CONCLUSION

William Barclay, *The essence of Abraham's faith in this case was that he believed that God could make the impossible possible. As long as we believe that everything depends on our efforts, we are bound to be pessimists, for experience has taught the grim lesson that our own efforts can achieve very little. When we realize that it is not our own efforts but God's grace and power which matter, then we become optimists, because we are bound to believe that with God nothing is impossible.*

INTRODUCTION

A. Verses 23-25 are Paul's application of Genesis 15:6 to every person who reads Paul's epistle to the Romans and responds by faith in Christ alone.
B. Douglas Moo, . . . *nowhere does he so solemnly and clearly state the application as he does here.*

ROMANS 4:23-25, *THE IMPACT OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH*

A. Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness just as it is for every person who places faith in Christ alone (23-24), ***But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,***

1. Paul declares that in Genesis 15:6, *it was counted to him* was written for everyone who believes God.
   a. *for ours also* echoes down through history to this room at this moment.
   b. John Stott, *Abraham was not unique in his experience of being justified by faith. For this is God's way of salvation for everybody.*
   c. Douglas Moo, *It is faith that is "reckoned": a faith that is apart from works, apart from circumcision, apart from the law, apart from sight—and therefore a "reckoning" that is solely a matter of grace.*

2. The object of faith is God.
   a. This faith is in the same God who raised Jesus from the dead.
   b. Douglas Moo, *Christians share with Abraham the same basis for justification—faith—and the same God as the object of that faith.*
   c. Tom Constable, *Paul intended his mention of God raising Jesus here to help the reader remember that He is the same God who brings life out of death as the God whom Abraham believed. . .It may be easier for us to believe than it was for Abraham because we look back on a resurrection completed whereas Abraham looked forward to one anticipated.*
   d. John Stott declares in verse 25, . . . *both the death and the resurrection of Jesus are attributed to the Father's initiative: he 'delivered him over to death', and he 'raised him up to life.'*

B. Jesus Christ died on the cross because of the sins of every believer and was raised with a view to every believer's justification (25), ***who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.***

1. Jesus died because of the sins of mankind.
   a. *trespasses*
      1) It means *sins against God, failure to keep the law of God.*
      2) Romans 5:16, *And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.*
      3) Isaiah 53:11-12, *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

   b. Verses for meditation on the death of Christ.
      1) Isaiah 53:5-6, *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
      2) Romans 5:6, *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*
      3) Romans 5:8, *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
      4) Galatians 1:4, *who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*

2. Jesus was raised with a view to our justification.
   a. *justification*
      1) It means *to acquit, to set free, to remove guilt, to be pronounced and treated as righteous, declared righteous.*
      2) His death is sufficient for all but efficient for those who place faith in Him alone, John Witmer, . . . *because He lives, God can credit His provided righteousness to the account of every person who responds by faith to that offer.*
      3) Romans 5:10, *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*
      4) Douglas Moo, *As Jesus' death provides the necessary grounds on which God's justifying action can proceed, so his resurrection, by vindicating Christ and freeing him forever from the influence of sin (cf. 6:10), provides for the ongoing power over sins experienced by the believer in union with Christ.*

b. Verses for meditation on the resurrection of Christ.
   1) Romans 5:18, *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.*
   2) Romans 8:32, *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*
   3) 1 Corinthians 15:17, *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*
   4) 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

c. Comments on justification.
   1) Tom Constable, *Justification is an act, not a process. And it is something God does, not man. . . Justification describes a person's status in the sight of the law, not the condition of his or her character. The condition of one's character and conduct is that with which sanctification deals.*
   2) Warren Wiersbe, *Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed. God looks on us and deals with us as though we had never sinned at all!*

3. Robert Mounce, *God's entire redemptive plan is summarized in this final verse of chap. 4.*

REVIEW OF ROMANS 4:1-25
A DEFENSE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Abraham and David were justified by faith because it is a gift and can't be earned by works (1-8)
- Circumcision is not the basis of justification because Abraham was justified before he was circumcised (9-12)
- The worldwide promise to Abraham came before the law so it came by grace through faith in God (13-17)
- Abraham's faith was based on hope in our faithful God. Difficult circumstances did not weaken but strengthened his faith as he glorified God (18-22)
- Everyone with the faith of Abraham is justified by God Who delivered Jesus to death for our trespasses and raised Him up for our justification (23-25)