

## Romans 4:17-22

1. In this chapter, Paul sets forth the kind of faith which is counted for/imputed to/reckoned for righteousness.
  - A. This kind of faith excludes the concept of acquiring righteousness by obligating God by a debt for work performed. **ROM 4:4.**
  - B. This kind of faith excludes circumcision since it preceded circumcision and circumcision is a work. **ROM 4:9-11.**
  - C. This kind of faith excludes the Law of Moses since it preceded the Law of Moses and the Law of Moses is works-oriented. **ROM 4:13-14 c/w GAL 3:12, 17-18.**
  - D. This kind of faith relies upon God's promise to do what is impossible with man.
2. (**ROM 4:17**) (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.
  - A. Abraham would certainly be the natural father of many nations, Jewish and non-Jewish.
  - B. Abraham would even be the spiritual father of spiritual nations of faith. **ROM 4:11 c/w 1PE 2:9.**
  - C. All true believers have Abraham for their father and participate in the promises God made to him. **GAL 3:9; HEB 11:12; REV 7:9.**
  - D. Abraham believed, *before* this God and *in* this God, Who had the power to make that which is dead alive. **JOH 5:21, 25-29; EPH 2:1.**
  - E. He believed in a God Who could speak of and promise things that had not happened as though they had already happened because He has the sovereign power to do what He promises in any area, whether it be things of this world or in the salvation of sinners who have no way to save themselves from their sin. **TIT 1:2; 2TI 1:9-10; EPH 1:3-5; ROM 8:28-30.**
3. **vs. 18-22.**
  - A. Abraham was 99 years old and no longer physically able to produce children and had none with his wife Sarah who was 90 years old when God said in **GEN 17:1-6**, "...a father of many nations have I made thee."
    - (1) Against any physical reason to hope, he believed in hope that what God said God could accomplish even if his own body was dead to producing children and Sarah's womb was dead to bearing children.
    - (2) If you believe in a God that can quicken the dead, that God can quicken a dead old man and a dead old woman and enable them to have life enough to produce and bear children.
  - B. (**ROM 4:20**) He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
    - (1) How then does one explain **GEN 17:15-22** ?
    - (2) In **GEN 17:17**, Abraham had a moment when he laughed at God's words and questioned the reality of them as he looked at *their age and inability* rather than the *ability and the promise of the God that was speaking to him*.
      - a. Abraham had by this time figured out that he no longer had ability to produce seed. **ROM 4:19.**
      - b. A big clue for him might have been that fertile Hagar was not conceiving.
    - (3) This is where the trouble always starts with man and his faith in God. He looks at something besides the promise and ability of God.
    - (4) He even raised the possibility to God in **v. 18** that Ishmael might be the fulfillment of the promise.

- a. Ishmael was the result of Sarah's suggestion that Abraham raise her children by her maid Hagar when Abraham still had the ability to produce seed. **GEN 16:1-6, 15-16.**
  - b. It seemed that time was of the essence! Years later, Saul made a fateful decision because he thought time was of the essence. **1SAM 13:8-14.**
  - c. It is understandable that Abraham thought Ishmael could be the promised seed because God had not specified that the heir would come from Sarah but only that he would come from Abraham's bowels. **GEN 15:1-6.**
    - [1] Thus he attempted to fulfill the promise through another woman while he still had ability.
    - [2] Mind that God's order for marriage is one man and one woman. **MAT 19:4-6.**
    - [3] Paul connects this fateful reasoning of Abraham with the bondage of works-justification which assumes that God's promise of life needs our help! **GAL 4:21-31.**
    - [4] That decision of Abraham did NOT help God bring God's promise to pass and had consequences that have affected the world ever since. **GEN 16:12.**
    - [5] This is what comes of man not trusting unconditional promises of God and adding his own works to God's. NOTE: If Jesus truly "paid it all" (as is commonly sung) then why do so many who sing that assume that there remains a debt which they must discharge or that man's lack of knowledge, faith or works negates Jesus' payment?
  - d. How many ill-fated relationships with dire consequences have been formed because of these same elements of not trusting God, impatience, compromising God's order and helping God with one's own works (especially in an area where God has promised something unconditionally)!
  - e. God has promised to raise the dead and destroy the earth (**JOH 5:28-29; 2PE 3:9-10**). Should we "help" Him bring these promises to pass?
  - f. Something to ponder: If it is true that the existence of the modern state of Israel is because of something God unconditionally promised, how is it that God needed the direct help of antichrist financiers and globalists like the United Nations to bring it to pass?
  - g. The highest example of faith in God's promise is when Jesus trusted God's promise in the scriptures that He would limit His sufferings and raise Him from the dead without any active "doing" on Jesus' part. **ACT 2:25-28.**
- (5) God waited until BOTH Abraham and Sarah were physically incapable of generating a child and then He told Abraham that he would have a son with her. **GEN 17:1-6.**
- (6) At this point, Abraham could not work for the promised son but only believe in the God Who quickens the dead. Faith like this is counted for righteousness. **ROM 4:5.**
- a. Faith that denies God's power to perform His own promises is not counted for righteousness.
  - b. Faith that trusts God to fulfil His own promises in spite of the impossible and without our works is rather counted for righteousness.
- (7) (**HEB 6:11-12**) And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- C. God, Abraham's friend (**JAM 2:23**) then reinforced what He said to him. **GEN 17:19-21**.
- (1) "...Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed..." (**GEN 17:19**).
    - a. indeed: In actual fact, in reality, in truth; really, truly, assuredly, positively.
    - b. The promise was not occult, figurative or legal-speak for adoption, etc. Sarah would actually bear a son.
    - c. Sarah would bear *a son*, not a gender-neutral offspring who would have to decide its own gender as it developed.
  - (2) God gave that son's name, stated that he was the covenant seed, told him the future of Ishmael and also when Isaac would be born.
  - (3) God did not even rebuke Abraham for his moment of doubt.
    - a. Every child of God except Jesus Christ has moments of doubt and weak faith:
      - [1] Will God provide? **MAT 6:24-34**.
      - [2] Why is Jesus sleeping in the time of peril? **MAT 8:23-27**.
      - [3] Sometimes faith falters because it looks at circumstances rather than Christ. **MAT 14:22-33**.
      - [4] Human infirmity sometimes perverts our reception of Jesus' words and we forget past proofs of His power. **MAT 16:5-10 ct/w 2CO 1:8-10**.
      - [5] Can I trust Jesus to bless where my efforts have failed? **LUK 5:1-10**.
    - b. The apostles who witnessed many of Christ's mighty works had many moments of doubt.
    - c. For Abraham, that moment was forgiven him and so he was blessed. **ROM 4:7-8**.
    - d. With his unbelief forgiven and that sin not imputed unto him, God saw only his faith. Let this be a comfort to the sincere believer who struggles imperfectly in the face of God's promises. This comfort is not to the hypocrite or apostate. **HEB 3:12**.
  - (4) Abraham did not stay in the moment of doubt. When God said, "indeed," he staggered not in unbelief, was strong in faith and was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. **ROM 4:19-21**.
    - a. The blessed believer is *fully persuaded* of God's words, unlike Agrippa. **ACT 26:27-28**.
    - b. Not even the quickening of the dead will persuade one who refuses God's words. **LUK 16:31**.
  - (5) Faith is activated by the word of God (**ROM 10:17**). The word works effectually in believers when it is mixed with faith. **1TH 2:13; HEB 4:2**.
    - a. There are varying degrees of faith. **MAT 8:26; 15:28**.
    - b. There may be things lacking in our faith. **1TH 3:10**.
    - c. We may need help to overcome unbelief which is frustrating faith. **MAR 9:24**.
    - d. Sometimes we are *slow of heart to believe* and have to hear the word again, read it again or see it lived in experience for faith to increase. **LUK 24:25-27; 2PE 1:12; PHIL 1:14**.
    - e. Abraham quit laughing and looking at his own power when he heard the word of God again. God's cure for moments of doubt when Satan is trying to snag us is a frank reinforcement of what He has said. **2TI 2:24-26**.
    - f. Abraham then *showed his faith by his works* (**JAM 2:17-23**) and obeyed

God's commands to circumcise himself, Ishmael and all the males of his household "...in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him" (**GEN 17:23-27**).

[1] He hastened to obey the commandment (**PSA 119:60**), and this strong work born of faith would be repeated in an even more unsavory duty later on. **GEN 22:1-3**.

[2] Showing faith by works is easy when it is something you would like to do anyway, as in producing Isaac.

[3] Showing faith by works is not easy when it is something that is painful or contrary to all natural instincts, as in the circumcisions or the offering up of Isaac. Such are great expressions of faith.

[4] The pain of "fessing up," repenting and facing potential ostracism from their countrymen did not stop those on the day of Pentecost from showing their faith by immediate works. **ACT 2:37-42**.

D. When the Lord returned in **GEN 18** to confirm the promise of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, Abraham gave no sign of doubt but Sarah did. **GEN 18:1-15**.

(1) Sarah laughed at the words of God as Abraham had done before, focusing on her condition which now exacerbated her history of barrenness. **GEN 18:11-12**.

a. In spite of her doubt, the Holy Spirit favorably remembered what good there was in the midst of her objection. **1PE 3:6**.

b. "And thus must we be apt to take notice of what is spoken decently and well, to the honour of those that speak it, though it may be mixed with that which is amiss, over which we should cast a mantle of love. 2. Human improbability often sets up in contradiction to the divine promise. The objections of sense are very apt to stumble and puzzle the weak faith even of true believers. It is hard to cleave to the first Cause, when second causes frown." (Matthew Henry)

(2) Interestingly, God queried Abraham about her response (**vs. 13-14**), as if Abraham had been delinquent in telling Sarah what God had told him in **GEN 17**.

a. Husbands, share God's promises with your wives. If you have found a promise of God that applies to your situation, share it with her (especially if it directly involves her).

b. Wives should expect to be able to receive such from their husbands. **1CO 14:35**.

(3) Sarah in a moment of fear denied that she laughed. **GEN 18:15**.

a. How futile is it to cover a hidden sin with an open one when God knows the very thoughts of the heart. **HEB 4:12-13 c/w PRO 28:13**.

b. Fear of rebuke often betrays us into this snare. **ISA 57:11**.

(4) Sarah did not stay in her moment of doubt. **HEB 11:11**.

a. As previously with Abraham, God's words directed her focus away from human weakness and inability to God's power and ability.

b. We have a God that can do what to us is impossible. **LUK 18:24-27**.

c. Do you have faith in the God that promises to do the impossible?

E. God fulfilled His promise to quicken two dead people to produce a son and Sarah eventually laughed in joy and pleasure rather than in doubt. **GEN 21:1-8**.

(1) God gave us laughter but we sometimes use it improperly. **ECC 7:6; PRO 14:9**.

(2) Jesus promised laughter to those who presently weep. **LUK 6:21**.

(3) God even seems to have a sense of (ironic) humor in that after Abraham laughed about the prospect of a son by Sarah, God told him to name the son *Isaac*, which

means “He laughs.” **GEN 17:19.**

- F. **(ROM 4:22)** And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.
  - (1) Even though there was a moment of doubt, Abraham's restored faith which *gave glory to God* rather than human ability (**ROM 4:20 c/w 1CO 1:28-31**) was again *imputed to him for righteousness*.
  - (2) The momentary lapse was not held against him when he recovered faith.
- 4. Paul then makes application of Abraham's faith to us. **ROM 4:23-25.**
  - A. If, like Abraham, we believe in the God Who has power to quicken the dead, then no form of death in this world frustrates His promise of life (**TIT 1:2**):
    - (1) Spiritual death does not frustrate it. **EPH 2:1-3.**
    - (2) Our physical death does not frustrate it. **JOH 11:25-26; PHIL 1:23.**
    - (3) Our temporary lapses do not frustrate it. **EPH 5:14; 2TI 2:13.**
    - (4) The death of Christ certainly did not frustrate it. **HEB 9:15.**
  - B. Christ's resurrection is foundational to our faith. Without that, there is no justification for sinners. **1CO 15:12-20; 1PE 1:20-21.**
  - C. Abraham's faith which was counted for righteousness was in the God of the impossible, relinquishing all hope to God's promise and power to even quicken the dead. **HEB 11:17-19 c/w JAM 2:21-23.**
- 5. **(GAL 4:28)** Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.