

Why Salvation by Faith Can be Hard to Believe - Romans 4

December 21, 2017

Why does Paul compare the faith for righteousness to Abraham's faith for Isaac?

Romans 4:16-17 ESV

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,

17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"--in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Just as impossible for a 100 year old man and his 90 year old wife to have a baby, so is the impossibility of sinful, depraved man being in right standing and having a relationship with a holy God.

Romans 4:18-22 ESV

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."

19 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, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

22 That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."

Just as Abraham believed God's promise contrary to all natural hope, logic, emotion and physiology, so must we believe God's promise contrary to our sins, failures, emotions, guilt, reasonings and Satan's accusations.

Romans 4:23-25 ESV

23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone,

24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord,

25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

1 Corinthians 15:17 ESV

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Romans 8:33-34 ESV

33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Why is salvation by faith hard to believe at times?

1. **The Impossible** - *faith always supersedes human reason*
"That Jesus would die for me in my place, is too good to true."

Romans 5:6-11 ESV

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

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.

11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Genesis 17:17 ESV

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?"

Genesis 18:11-14 ESV

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.

12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'"

14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

2. **Guilt** - *faith always supersedes guilts*
"My sin is too great to be forgiven. God is angry with me and has forsaken me."

Matthew 27:1-5 ESV

1 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

2 And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,

4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself."

5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

Revelation 12:10-11 ESV

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

3. **Pride** - *the inability to see and admit our need - "If something is broken, I can fix it, I don't need charity!"*

Matthew 27:6-10 ESV

6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money."

7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,

10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Matthew 23:23-28 ESV

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

4. **Misunderstanding Faith** - *the error of thinking that faith is something I must muster or generate within myself*

Romans 10:6-10 ESV

6 But **the righteousness based on faith says**, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "**The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart**" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

9 because, **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:17 ESV

17 So **faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**