

Exultation, or the Certainty of Salvation.

Romans 4:1-25

Last week Taylor spoke about the fact that God saves and justifies the ungodly through faith alone and not through works.

In chapter 4 of the letter to the Romans the apostle Paul continues that theme and shows the certainty of this promise of God for all who believe by going back to the justification of Abraham.

As we know Abraham is the father of the Jewish people with regards to their physical birth.

But in this chapter we will learn that the promise of God that Abraham would become the father of many nations relates to the fact that he is considered to be the spiritual father of all who believe God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before going to Romans 4 let's quickly look at the promise of God to Abraham.

Genesis 15:4-6

- And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 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." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
- Maar zie, het woord van de HEERE kwam tot hem: Deze man zal uw erfgenaam niet zijn, maar iemand die uit uw eigen lichaam voortkomt, die zal uw erfgenaam zijn. 15:5 Toen leidde Hij hem naar buiten en zei: Kijk toch naar de hemel en tel de sterren, als u ze kunt tellen. En Hij zei tegen hem: Zo talrijk zal uw nageslacht zijn. 15:6 En hij geloofde in de HEERE, en Die rekende hem dat tot gerechtigheid.

Actually the promise of God starts in verse 1 of this chapter of Genesis. There God told Abram that his reward would be very great. You can read this passage for yourself later on.

In these verses we see that God promises Abram that his offspring would be very numerous, too many to be actually counted.

Later on in the sermon we will see that God actually does keep this promise.

So, let's go to the first verses of chapter 4.

Romans 4:1-2

- **What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**
- **Wat zullen wij dan zeggen dat Abraham, onze vader, wat het vlees betreft verkregen heeft? Immers, als Abraham uit werken gerechtvaardigd is, heeft hij iets om zich op te beroemen, maar niet bij God.**

The apostle Paul starts here with a rhetorical question.

And as he asks what Abraham gained according to the flesh, he is talking about what we can gain in a spiritual sense by human effort, by what we can do.

If we could be justified by works, then indeed we would have something to boast about, but we still couldn't boast about it before God.

In the next verses we will see that Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith.

Romans 4:3-4

- For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
- Want wat zegt de Schrift? En Abraham geloofde God, en het is hem tot gerechtigheid gerekend. Aan hem nu die werkt, wordt het loon niet toegerekend naar genade, maar naar wat men *hem* verschuldigd is.

The apostle Paul does make two very important statements in these 2 verses:

- Abraham received the righteousness of God because he believed God. It was actually an undeserved gift of God, thus by grace.
- If Abraham, or any other person, would have been justified by works and thus would have earned righteousness then it would no longer have been by grace.

As Paul states very clear in Ephesians 2:8 we are saved by grace through faith. That indeed excludes any possibility of even the slightest dependence on works for our salvation.

Paul reinstates that also in the next verses.

Romans 4:5-6

- **And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:**
- **Bij hem echter die niet werkt, maar gelooft in Hem Die de goddeloze rechtvaardigt, wordt zijn geloof gerekend tot gerechtigheid. Zoals ook David de mens zalig spreekt aan wie God gerechtigheid toerekent, zonder werken:**

Again Paul emphasizes salvation by grace through faith in these verses.

And he relates to that also in the following verses in which he quotes some sayings from king David:

Romans 4:7-8

- **“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”**
- **Welzalig zijn zij van wie de ongerechtigheden vergeven, en van wie de zonden bedekt zijn, welzalig is de man aan wie de Heere de zonde niet toerekent.**

There is no way that we could nullify our sins and guilt by doing good works. That is true in this world and it is true also in the Kingdom of God.

If you're being caught on breaking the traffic rules by speeding or by neglecting the traffic lights, no judge would let you get off the hook if you demanded not to be punished because you're doing a lot of volunteer work, isn't it?

You still would have to pay the fine for what you did wrong. No amount of good works could change that.

The same is true in the Kingdom of God. No amount of good works can ever undo the spiritual consequence of your sins.

God counted the faith of Abraham unto him as righteousness.

And from Ephesians 2:8-9 we know that this is a gift from God, so we have no reason whatsoever to boast about it.

Romans 4:9-10

- Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.
- *Geldt deze zaligspreking nu alleen voor besneden mensen of ook voor onbesneden mensen? Wij zeggen immers dat aan Abraham het geloof gerekend is tot gerechtigheid. Hoe is het hem dan toegerekend? Toen hij besneden was of als een onbesnedene? Niet als besnedene, maar als onbesnedene!*

God gave circumcision to Abraham as a sign of His promise. But does that mean that Gods' promise was only for those who were/are circumcised?

In order to answer this question Paul looks at the situation as it was at the time that Abraham believed God and God counted it unto him as righteousness.

From the Scriptures it is clear that this happened when Abraham was not circumcised yet.

He continues talking about this in the next verses.

Romans 4:11-12

- He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

The Dutch version of these verses is on the next sheet.

Romans 4:11-12

- En hij heeft het teken van de besnijdenis ontvangen *als* een zegel van de gerechtigheid van *het* geloof *dat hij had* toen hij *nog* onbesneden was, opdat hij een vader zou zijn van allen die geloven, *hoewel zij onbesneden zijn*, opdat ook hun de gerechtigheid toegerekend zou worden; en om een vader te zijn van *hen die besneden zijn*, voor hen *namelijk* die niet alleen besneden zijn, maar die ook wandelen in de voetsporen van het geloof van onze vader Abraham *dat hij had* toen hij *nog* onbesneden was.

As we see circumcision was the seal of the righteousness that Abraham received as he believed God while still being uncircumcised. He did not receive righteousness because he was circumcised, but he received the sign of circumcision because God counted his faith unto him as righteousness.

As such we can indeed compare it to baptism.

Baptism doesn't save us, even though it symbolizes our dying to sin and being raised in newness of life by our faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is by grace through faith that we are saved and our baptism is a public confession of that, while our seal is indeed the Holy Spirit being given unto us, together with a new heart and a new spirit as we see in Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-27.

Romans 4:13-15

- For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.
- Want niet door de wet is de belofte aan Abraham of zijn nageslacht *gedaan* dat hij een erfgenaam van de wereld zou zijn, maar door de gerechtigheid van het geloof.

Abraham did not receive this promise of God through the law. As a matter of fact, the law as we know it from the other books of Moses was only given hundreds of years later. The promise of God to Abraham was given on the basis of his faith in God.

Paul continues his statement in the next verses.

Romans 4:13-15

- For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.
- Immers, als zij die uit de wet zijn, erfgenamen zijn, is het geloof zonder inhoud geworden en is de belofte tenietgedaan. De wet brengt immers toorn teweeg, want waar geen wet is, is ook geen overtreding.

If the realization of this promise would depend on fulfilling the law, then faith would have lost its meaning and its promise.

While the law was given to guide the people of God in their walk with God as His children and His people, it also makes known sin and transgression and the punishments related to that. As such it brings condemnation upon those who transgress it, just as condemnation came after the sin of Adam and Eve.

Romans 4:16-17

- 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, 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.

Again, the Dutch version is on the next sheet.

Romans 4:16-17

- Daarom *is* het uit *het* geloof, opdat het *zou zijn* naar genade, met als doel dat de belofte zeker zou zijn voor het hele nageslacht, niet voor dat wat uit de wet alleen is, maar ook voor dat wat uit *het* geloof van Abraham is, die een vader is van ons allen, zoals geschreven staat: Ik heb u tot een vader van vele volken gemaakt. *Dit was hij* tegenover Hem in Wie hij geloofd heeft, *namelijk* God, Die de doden levend maakt, en de dingen die niet zijn, roept alsof zij er waren.

The promise of God rests on faith, so that it is from grace and not from works. Therefore it is also there not only for those who belong to the Abrahams' descendants according to the flesh, those who also received Gods' law through His revelation of it to Moses, but only to those who believe in God as Abraham did, whether they were/are circumcised or not.

And we need to realize that the promise of God was an impossible case according to the flesh, according to what humanly wise could happen.

We see that confirmed in the next verses of Romans 4.

Romans 4:18-19

- 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."
- En hij heeft tegen alles in gehoopt en geloofd dat hij een vader van vele volken zou worden, overeenkomstig wat gezegd was: Zo zal uw nageslacht zijn.

When Abraham received this promise of God that he would become the father of many nations, it came at a point in time that such a thing was physically impossible, taking into consideration his age and the age of Sarah.

And even from that time on Abraham still had to wait until he was 100 years old before the son of the promise, Isaac, was born.

Let's go to the next verses.

Romans 4:18-19

- 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.
- En niet verzwakt in het geloof, heeft hij er niet op gelet dat zijn eigen lichaam reeds verstorven was – hij was ongeveer honderd jaar oud – en dat ook de moederschoot van Sara verstorven was.

Even though Abraham must have realized that God was promising him something that physically was impossible he still did not doubt God. Despite the evidence for the fact that the promise physically was impossible he believed God.

And just as it was physically impossible for Abraham to receive the son of the promise, so it is spiritually impossible for us to be saved on the basis of our works. It is only by the grace of God that we can be saved, totally undeserved, as we would and could never walk perfectly in His ways, due to our sinful nature. If salvation would depend on what we can do then salvation would be impossible also.

Romans 4:20-22

- No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, 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. That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”
- En hij heeft aan de belofte van God niet getwijfeld door ongelof, maar werd gesterkt in het geloof, terwijl hij God de eer gaf. Hij was er ten volle van overtuigd dat *God* ook machtig was te doen wat beloofd was. Daarom ook is het hem tot gerechtigheid gerekend.

This is what faith truly is all about:

Trust and believe God against all odds, being fully convinced that God can and will do what He promised.

This is what truly brings glory unto God: to believe Him for the impossible.

And apart from God salvation is absolutely impossible.

Let's go to the last verses of this chapter of the letter to the Romans.

Romans 4:23-25

- 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, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.
- Nu is het niet alleen ter wille van hem geschreven dat het hem toegerekend is, maar ook ter wille van ons, aan wie het zal worden toegerekend, aan *ons namelijk* die geloven in Hem Die Jezus, onze Heere, uit de doden opgewekt heeft, Die om onze overtredingen is overgeleverd, en opgewekt om onze rechtvaardiging.

That these words from the Old Testament were also written down for us the apostle Paul confirms also in the following verses from 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- Heel *de* Schrift *is* door God ingegeven en is nuttig om *daarmee* te onderwijzen, te weerleggen, te verbeteren *en* op te voeden in de rechtvaardigheid, opdat de mens die God toebehoort, volmaakt zou zijn, tot elk goed werk volkomen toegerust.

If there is one reason why I so often go back to what we call the Old Testament, then it is because of these verses.

When Paul wrote them, the New Testament hadn't been written and put together yet.

Of course, now the New Testament is included in the total of Scripture that has been given to us by God and all of it is needed for us also.

But nowhere does the Bible tell us that we can ignore the major part of it. All of it is useful, or, as Paul says it, profitable for us.

Earlier I promised you that we still would look at the fulfilment of the promise of God to Abram. Let's go there.

Revelation 7:9-10

- After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
- Hierna zag ik en zie, een grote menigte, die niemand tellen kon, uit alle naties, stammen, volken en talen, stond vóór de troon en vóór het Lam, bekleed met witte gewaden en palmtakken in hun hand. En zij riepen met een luide stem: De zaligheid is van onze God, Die op de troon zit, en van het Lam!

Physically Abraham had 8 sons in total:

With Hagar: Ismael (Genesis 16)

With Sarah: Isaac (Genesis 21)

With Ketura: Zimran, Joksan, Medan, Midian, Jisbak and Suah (Genesis 25:1-2)

In these verses we see the spiritual offspring from Abram, or Abraham, as God changed his name into later on.

The name Abraham actually means father of a great multitude.

And as these verses from revelation teach us, no one could actually count them.

So, God completely fulfilled His promise to Abraham.

Let's go to the last sheet.

Hebrews 11:1, 6

- Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- Het geloof nu is een vaste grond van de dingen die men hoopt, *en* een bewijs van de zaken die men niet ziet.
- Zonder geloof is het echter onmogelijk *God* te behagen. Want wie tot God komt, moet geloven dat Hij is, en dat Hij beloont wie Hem zoeken.

In these verses we see again confirmed the importance and necessity of faith.

It relates to things we cannot see yet, but for which we hope with a steadfast hope, because that hope is based on the eternal promises of God.

Shall we pray?