

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ROM. 4:18 [Abraham] against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

LUKE 24:1 Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

NOTES

A Promised Received by Faith

(Easter)

Lesson Text: Romans 4:18-25; Luke 24:1-9

Related Scriptures: Hebrews 11:11-12, 19; Romans 4:3-16;
John 2:13-22; Luke 18:31-34

TIMES: A.D. 56; A.D. 30

PLACES: from Corinth; Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—“[Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

Lesson Exposition

REASSURANCE OFFERED— Rom. 4:18-21

Believing hope (Rom. 4:18-19). As chapter 4 opens, Paul turns his attention to the great man of faith, Abraham. Since Abraham is the father of the Hebrew people, he is greatly revered and held forth as an example of genuine faith. If Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had reason to “glory,” or boast (4:2). But he was not justified by works, but by faith.

Abraham’s status as “the father of many nations” (vs. 18) meant not only that several people groups could trace their lineage back to him but also that certain promises of blessing made to him would come upon the Gentiles too. “Instead of the Jew complaining that Abraham was not saved by Law, he ought to rejoice that God’s salvation is available to all men, and that Abraham has a spiritual family (all true believers) as well as a physical family (the nation of Israel)” (Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Victor).

That Abraham “against hope believed in hope” means that in spite of what might have appeared to be a hopeless situation, he continued to trust God. His “seed” would not be limited to his physical descendants. All those possessing faith like Abraham’s are his children (Gal. 3:26-29).

When we look at the life of Abraham in Genesis, it becomes clear that his faith had its ups and downs, but he never stopped believing and was always moving in the right direction.

As we know, both Abraham and Sarah were well beyond the age of having children, but Abraham’s faith was not weak in this regard. He had to wait twenty-five years just to see the fulfillment begin. In spite of “the deadness of Sarah’s womb” (Rom. 4:19), he trusted God, “who quickeneth the dead” (vs. 17).

God’s promise (Rom. 4:20-21). For Abraham, there were ostensibly good reasons to doubt the promise of God that he would have an heir. Apart from divine intervention, having a child at

the age that Abraham and Sarah had reached was impossible.

Abraham nevertheless “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” A close examination of the life of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis, however, reveals that they tried to help God fulfill His plan by running ahead of Him, a temptation that some of us also have succumbed to.

Ultimately, faith prevailed, for Abraham was “strong in faith.” This last phrase could be translated that he was “strengthened in his faith,” indicating that, over time, his faith continued to grow, even when he might have been tempted to stop believing God’s promises. Both Abraham and Sarah likely concluded that although they did not know how God would keep His word, they knew He would.

RIGHTEOUSNESS REALIZED—

Rom. 4:22-25

Imputation (Rom. 4:22-23). Because Abraham trusted God, righteousness was imputed to him. The word translated “imputed” is from the same root word rendered “counted” in verse 3. It is rendered “reckoned” in other places (vss. 4, 9, 10). It could also be translated “regarded” or “credited.” The idea, of course, is that Abraham was declared righteous in God’s sight because of his faith, not because of what he did (vss. 1-6).

Justification (Rom. 4:24-25). As Paul points out, what was said in Scripture about Abraham was not just for his benefit; it was for ours as well.

Note that Paul summarizes saving faith as trusting in Christ and His resurrection. There are people who believe that Jesus was a prophet, a great teacher, and a healer, but they do not believe He is the risen Son of God. This, however, is essential to our salvation. If we confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in His resurrection, we are

counted among the saved (Rom. 10:9).

Christ was “delivered for our offences” (4:25). The word “offences” means “trespasses” and is so rendered elsewhere (Matt. 6:14-15; II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).

Not only must we believe that “Christ died for our sins” (I Cor. 15:3), but we must also trust that “he rose again the third day” (vs. 4). This, Paul declares, was to bring about our justification.

As critical as it was for Jesus to go to the cross and die for our sins, what if it had all ended there? What if Jesus’ lifeless body had remained in the tomb? At best, we might have considered Him a martyr, but if He had not risen, His promise would have proved false. How then could we trust anything He said? His resurrection was essential for our justification. As Paul writes elsewhere, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (I Cor. 15:17).

RESURRECTION

ACCOMPLISHED—Luke 24:1-9

Spices prepared (Luke 24:1). Luke 24 begins, like the other resurrection accounts, by telling us that it occurred “upon the first day of the week” (vs. 1), that is, Sunday, later known as the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10; cf. Acts 20:7). This is in contrast to the Sabbath, the seventh day, the Jewish day of rest (Luke 23:54-56).

At the break of day, the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee (8:1-3; 23:55) came to anoint His body with spices, as was customary. Because of the Sabbath, they were unable to do this prior to His burial.

Stone moved (Luke 24:2-3). One of the questions the women asked as they journeyed to the sepulchre concerned the removal of the stone covering its entrance (Mark 16:3). Prior to their arrival, however, an angel had

rolled the stone away (Matt. 28:2). This was not to let Christ out, but to let others see in!

Much to their surprise, when the women entered the tomb, the body of Jesus was no longer there.

Surprised women (Luke 24:4-5). Obviously, the women were in a quandary, wondering what had happened to the body of Jesus.

As the women were trying to ascertain what had occurred, “two men stood by them in shining garments” (vs. 4). Clearly, these were heavenly messengers, as the other Gospel accounts indicate (Matt. 28:5; John 20:12).

As typically happened with most angelic visitations in Scripture, the women who saw these divine beings were frightened. It was also typical for angels to reassure the humans they visited by telling them not to be afraid.

Showing reverence for the angels, the women “bowed down their faces to the earth” (Luke 24:5). Then the angels asked a striking question: “Why seek ye the living among the dead?”

Sacrifice complete (Luke 24:6-7). Addressing the confusion of the women, the angels continued to reassure them.

The message of the gospel is both simple and straightforward: “He is not here, but is risen” (vs. 6).

Since these women had been long-time followers of Jesus, they had heard much of His teaching. The bulk of His ministry occurred in Galilee, and they had certainly heard Him foretell His rejection, death, and resurrection. Luke records several times that Jesus had said so (9:22, 44; 18:31-34).

Staggering news (Luke 24:8-9). Reminded by the angels of what Jesus had said, the women remembered what the Lord had taught them about His approaching death and resurrection. As all of us know, there are times when we selectively forget certain things.

As with the two on the Emmaus road (vss. 13-16), there may have been some purposeful veiling of their minds.

Leaving the tomb, the women immediately went to the Eleven and informed them of what they had seen and heard. The mention of others indicates the presence of additional disciples in Jerusalem at this time.

Almost twenty centuries have rolled by since Christ arose and gave the command to be witnesses to “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

As Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). Hallelujah, He is risen indeed!

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that “against hope” Abraham “believed in hope” (Rom. 4:18)?
2. What do we learn about Abraham’s faith from the account in Genesis?
3. In what way was Abraham “strong in faith” (vs. 20)?
4. What is imputed righteousness?
5. How is Jesus’ resurrection connected to our justification?
6. Why did the women come to Jesus’ tomb?
7. Who were the two men who met the women at the sepulcher?
8. What important question did these men ask?
9. Since Jesus had spoken of His rising again, why did the women (and later the disciples) not believe it?
10. Where did the women go after leaving the tomb?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The faith of one man can be a blessing to the entire world (Rom. 4:18-19).
2. Faith in God causes us to continue in righteousness, even when the promise seems obscure (vss. 20-22).
3. The blessings of Abraham are extended to us through Jesus (vss. 23-25).
4. When we seek Jesus, things may not turn out as we expect, but we will always get what we need (Luke 24:1-4).
5. God's true servants remind us of His promises (vss. 4-8).
6. When we have good news, we should hasten to share it with others (vs. 9).

—Valante M. Grant.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How do the promises that God made to Abraham impact both Jews and Gentiles? Share personal examples of their impact on your life.
2. Using Abraham's example (Rom. 4:20), what should we do to remain faithful and stand on the promises of God?
3. Identify ways that your faith can bring blessings to your home and community.
4. Compare Abraham's role and Jesus' role as related to the promise of salvation.
5. What does the resurrection mean to Christians?

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“[Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

What happens when God promises something that seems impossible? How do we react?

Abraham was placed in such a situation. Here was God telling Abraham that he was going to have a son. It would have been easy for him to scoff, but the Bible tells us that Abraham believed in the Lord.

Abraham's deep faith in God was counted to him as righteousness. In other words, through faith in God, Abraham was justified, or declared righteous, by God's grace.

Abraham believed what seemed to be impossible. God calls on us to believe the “impossible” too—that He raised Jesus from the dead. How could a dead man come back to life? The truth is that God can and did raise Jesus from the dead, just as Jesus Himself promised (Matt. 16:21).

Just as Abraham's faith in God was counted to him for righteousness, so our faith in God, the One who raised Jesus from the dead, is counted to us for righteousness (Rom. 4:24).

The golden text reminds us that our faith in God is based on His work through His Son Jesus, who was “delivered for our offences.” That is, He died in our place, taking on Himself the punishment for our sins, or “offences.” Jesus, however, not only died but also “was raised again for our justification.” In other words, His resurrection is the proof that faith in Him brings “justification.” It assures us that we are counted as righteous in Christ.

—Jennifer Francis.