

The Parish of Wellow

Faith not Works

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passage

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

- 1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?
- 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God.
- 3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."
- 4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.
- 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,

15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

2. Sermon Notes

The Letter to the Romans - Vital Statistics

PURPOSE:

To introduce Paul to the Romans and to give a sample of his message before he arrives in Rome.

AUTHOR:

Paul

TO WHOM WRITTEN:

The Christians in Rome and believers everywhere

DATE WRITTEN:

About AD57, from Corinth as Paul was preparing for his visit to Jerusalem

SETTING:

Apparently Paul had finished his work in the east, and he planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain after first bringing a collection to Jerusalem for the poor Christians there.

The Roman church was mostly Gentile but also contained a great number of Jews.

KEY VERSE

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' Romans 5:1

KEY PEOPLE

Paul, Phoebe

KEY PLACE

Rome

SPECIAL FEATURES

Paul wrote Romans as an organised and carefully presented statement of his faith- it does not have the form of a typical letter. He does however; spend considerable time greeting people in Rome at the end of the letter.

2.1 In Romans chapters 1-4 Paul wrestles with the issue of 'justification by faith'.

- Paul claims that we are made right with God, not by our good Works, but by God's gracious act in sending His Son as a payment for our sin.
- We find God's salvation difficult to accept because all our lives we have had it drilled into us that you have to "do good to get to Heaven".
- Paul points out that no one is "good enough" and therefore we can only be saved by a gracious act of mercy on God's part.

2.2 Paul encourages his Roman Christian audience and us to look at the Patron Saint of The Jews, Abraham. Paul asks and answers three important questions:

- i. Question: How was Abraham made right with God? Answer: Abraham was not justified by his good works but by his faith
- ii. Question: Was Abraham made right with God by being circumcised? Answer: Abraham was not justified by his religious acts but by his faith
- iii. Question: What is so special about Abraham's faith that leads to his salvation? Answer: Abraham believes God's promises and trusts his life to them.

2.3 Question: How was Abraham made right with God? Answer: Abraham was not justified by his good works but by his faith (Romans 4:1-5)

- In verse 3 Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 stating that 'Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness'
- The first thing Paul wants us to see is the wording . . . "it was credited to him . . ." Paul observes, "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.." (v. 4).
- The word for "credit" argues Paul, means to be given something as an undeserved gift. When you get paid at the end of the week for working, you don't consider it a "gift". It is the payment for work that has been done. It is a wage, not a gift!
- Paul argues that Abraham was not justified because of what he did, but because he was prepared to believe in the undeserved gift that God was going to give to Abraham in making him the father of all nations.
- Note two key things in verse 5: "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."
 - i. It is not the one who works, but the one who trusts God, that is justified or declared "not guilty."
 - ii. God justifies the wicked!

2.4 Question: Was Abraham made right with God by being circumcised? Answer: Abraham was not justified by his religious acts but by his faith (Romans 4:13-16)

- Abraham was declared right with God is in Genesis 15 and the rite of circumcision doesn't even come on the scene until many years later when Abraham was 99 years old as recorded in Genesis 17 argues Paul.
- Abraham's right relationship with God is not because of His good works or because of His religious observances. His righteousness is not even because of the Law because the Law wasn't in existence until Moses. Abraham was declared righteous by faith says Paul in verses 13 to 16.

2.5 Question: What is so special about Abraham's faith that leads to his salvation? Answer: Abraham believes God's promises and trusts his life to them.

- Despite being childless and ninety years of age Abraham and Sarah trust God that they will have a son and heir. Thus when Isaac is born Abraham and Sarah know that his arrival is the supernatural work of God and not something that they had accomplished in their own strength.

2.6 What does our faith look like?

Do we:

- Trust God's character?
- Believe God's promises?
- Live our lives on the basis of those promises?

3. Questions to consider

3.1 A good friend of yours says one day she believes she will go to heaven because she has been a good person all her life. Would Paul agree that her position in heaven is secure? What would you say to her?

3.2 A mother says to you one day that she is having her child baptised as a way of ensuring that her child will make it to heaven. Would Paul agree that the child's position in heaven is secure? What would you say to that mother?

3.3 How will you this week trust God's character more? What promise of God will you hold onto this week? Will those around you see that you have a faith in God?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293